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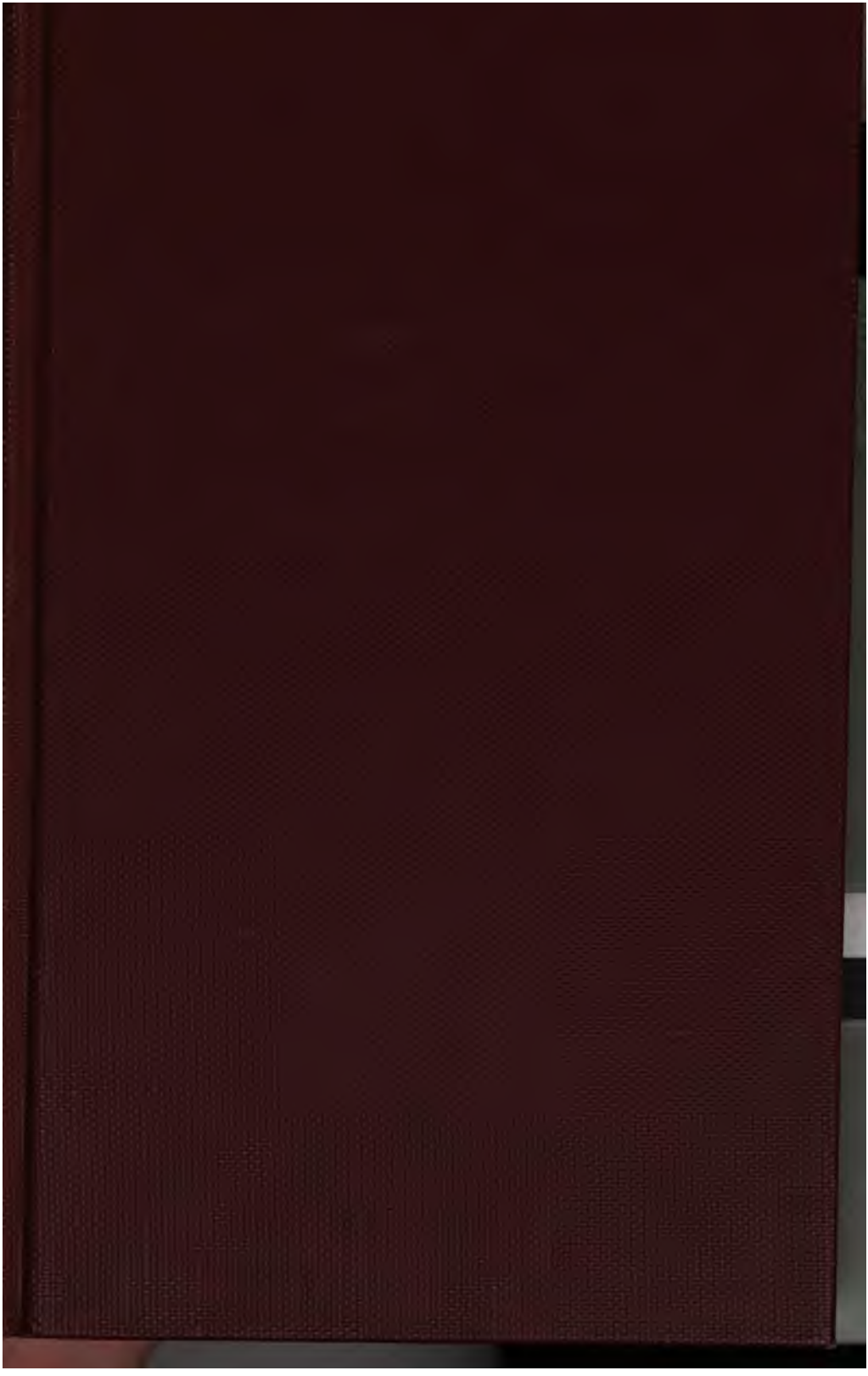

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A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES:

CONTAINING

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRINCIPLES ADVANCED BY

DAVID HUME, Esq.

IN

AN ESSAY ON MIRACLES:

WITH

A CORRESPONDENCE ON THE SUBJECT

BY

MR. HUME, DR. CAMPBELL, AND DR. BLAIR.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

SERMONS AND TRACTS.

BY GEORGE CAMPBELL, D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE, AND ONE OF THE MINISTERS, OF ABERDEEN.

JOHN X. 25.—*The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is not the only, nor even the chief, design of these sheets, to refute the reasoning and objections of Mr. Hume, with regard to miracles: The chief design of them is, to set the principal argument for Christianity in its proper light. On a subject that has been so often treated, it is impossible to avoid saying many things which have been said before. It may, however, with reason, be affirmed, that there still remains, on this subject, great scope for new observations. Besides, it ought to be remembered, that the evidence of any complex argument depends very much on the order into which the material circumstances are digested, and the manner in which they are displayed.

The *Essay on Miracles* deserves to be considered as one of the most dangerous attacks that have been made on our religion. The danger results not solely from the merit of *the piece*; it results much more from that of *the author*. *The piece* itself, like every other work of Mr. Hume, is ingenious; but its merit is more of the oratorial kind than of the philosophical. The merit of *the author*, I acknowledge, is great. The many useful volumes he has published of *history*, as well as on *criticism*, *politics*, and *trade*, have justly procured him, with all persons of taste and discernment, the highest reputation as a writer. What pity is it, that this reputation should have been sullied by attempts to undermine the foundation both of *natural religion*, and of *revealed!*

For my own part, I think it a piece of justice in me, to acknowledge the obligations I owe the author, before I enter on the proposed examination. I have not only been much entertained and instructed by his works; but, if I am possessed of any talent in abstract reasoning, I am not a little indebted to what he has written on *human nature*, for the improvement of that talent. If therefore, in this tract, I have refuted Mr. Hume's *Essay*, the greater share of the merit is perhaps to be ascribed to Mr. Hume himself. The compliment which the Russian monarch, after the famous battle of Poltowa, paid the

Swedish generals, when he gave them the honourable appellation of his *masters in the art of war*, I may, with great sincerity, pay my acute and ingenious adversary.

I shall add a few things concerning the occasion and form of the following dissertation.

Some of the principal topics here discussed were more briefly treated in a *sermon* preached before the *Synod of Aberdeen*, and are now made public at their desire. To the end, that an argument of so great importance might be more fully and freely canvassed than it could have been, with propriety, in a sermon, it was judged necessary to new-model the discourse, and to give it that form in which it now appears.

The *edition* of Mr. Hume's Essays, to which I always refer in this work, is that printed at *London*, in duodecimo, 1750 *, intitled, *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Uuderstanding*. I have, since finishing this tract, seen a later *edition*, in which there are a few *variations*. None of them appeared to me so material as to give ground for altering the *quotations* and *references* here used. There is indeed one *alteration*, which candour required that I should mention: I have accordingly mentioned it in a note †.

The *arguments* of the essayist I have endeavoured to refute by *argument*. Mere *declamation* I know no way of refuting but by *analysing* it; nor do I conceive how *inconsistencies* can be answered otherwise than by *exposing* them. In such *analysis* and *exposition*, which, I own, I have attempted without ceremony or reserve, an air of *ridicule* is unavoidable: But this *ridicule*, I am well aware, if founded in *misrepresentation*, will at last rebound upon *myself*. It is possible, that, in some things, I have *mistaken* the author's meaning; I am conscious, that I have not, in any thing, designedly *misrepresented* it.

* As this advertisement was prefixed to the first edition of the Dissertation, I was not a little surprised to observe, that the French translator declared, in the first sentence of his *Avis au Lecteur*, that he did not know what edition of Mr. Hume's Essays I had used in this work. On proceeding, I discovered that my *advertisement* has not been translated by him, which makes me suspect, that, by some accident, it had been left out of the copy which he used.

† Page 101.

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PREFACE.

I HERE offer to the Public a new and improved edition of my Dissertation on Miracles, first printed in the year 1762, together with some other Tracts related to it, as supplying additional evidences of the truth of our Religion, displaying its amiable spirit, and manifesting its beneficial tendency, in respect, not only of individuals, but of communities and states.

The first of these is a Sermon on the Spirit of the Gospel, preached before the Synod of Aberdeen in 1771. The second, a Sermon preached before the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in 1777; the scope of which is to show, that the success of the first publishers of the gospel is a proof of its truth. The third is a Sermon preached at the Assizes at Aberdeen, on the happy influence of Religion on Civil Society. The fourth also is a Sermon, on the Duty of Allegiance, preached at Aberdeen in 1776, on the Fast-day, on account of the Rebellion in America; and the fifth, an Address to the People of Scotland, on the alarms that had been raised in regard to Popery.

On the Dissertation itself I have made a few amendments, not very material I acknowledge, yet of some use for obviating objections and preventing mistakes. It has been observed by several, that Mr. Hume has, since the Dissertation first appeared in print, once and again republished the Essay to which it was intended as an answer; not only without taking the smallest notice that any thing reasonable, or even specious, had been urged in opposition to his doctrine, but without making any alteration of any consequence on what he had advanced. I know but one exception, if it shall be thought of moment enough to be called an exception, from this remark. What, in former editions, had been thus expressed, as quoted in the Dissertation *, "Upon the whole, it appears that no testimony

* Part I. Sect. 1.

"ly attacked. I was walking in the Cloisters of the Jesuits "College of la Fleche, (a town in which I passed two years of "my youth) and was engaged in conversation with a Jesuit of "some parts and learning, who was relating to me, and urging "some nonsensical miracle performed lately in their Convent; "when I was tempted to dispute against him; and as my head "was full of the topics of my Treatise of Human Nature, "which I was at that time composing, this argument imme- "diately occurred to me, and I thought it very much gravelled "my companion. But at last he observed to me, that it was "impossible for that argument to have any solidity; because it "operated equally against the Gospel as the Catholic miracles; "which observation I thought proper to admit as a sufficient "answer. I believe you will allow, that the freedom at least "of this reasoning makes it somewhat extraordinary to have "been the produce of a Convent of Jesuits; though perhaps "you may think that the sophistry of it savours plainly of the "place of its birth: I beg my compliments to Mrs. Campbell; "and am, with great regard,

"Sir,

"Your most obedient humble Servant,

"*Edin. June* 7, 1762." "DAVID HUME."

The reader will perceive, from this letter, that Mr. Hume had not only read my book, since the publication, but had perused the manuscript before. The fact was, I had sent my papers to a very respectable Clergyman in Edinburgh, still living, who was well acquainted with that author, and who has, since that time, eminently distinguished himself in the world, by his own writings; of whose judgment, as I had a high and just esteem, I was desirous to have his opinion of my piece, in respect both of argument and of composition, before I should venture to lay it before the Public. This gentleman, in return, after giving his opinion in a candid and friendly manner, added, that, as he knew I was myself a little acquainted with Mr. Hume, there would be at least no impropriety, if I consented, in his showing him the manuscript. To this I heartily agreed; and did it the more readily, as I thought it very possible that, in some things, I might have mistaken that author's mean-

ing; in which case, he was surely better qualified than any other person to set me right. That, however, had not been the case; for though Mr. Hume remarks very freely on my examination of his Essay, he does not, in a single instance, charge me with either misunderstanding or misrepresenting him. In returning the manuscript, Mr. Hume accompanied it with a letter to my friend, containing such observations as had occurred to him in the perusal. This letter, with the writer's permission, was transmitted to me. It is to it he alludes in the second sentence of that which he afterwards wrote to me, and which is inserted above.

It cannot be denied that, in the first letter, he appeared not a little hurt by the freedom of the manner in which his principles and reasoning had been canvassed. To complaints of this kind a few hints are subjoined as suggesting topics from which a sufficient answer might be drawn to some of my refutations and objections. In regard to a few particular expressions complained of, I have, as he justly observes, either removed or softened them, that I might, as much as possible, avoid the offence, without impairing the argument. For the hints he has thrown out, by way of reply, I consider myself as indebted to him. They have suggested objections which had not occurred to me, and which required to be obviated, that the argument might have all the weight, and all the illustration of which it is capable. I did accordingly, where it appeared requisite, introduce, and in my judgment, refute the suggested answer. Thus I was enabled to anticipate objections, and remove difficulties, which might have occurred to other readers, and been thought by some very momentous. But as the manuscript had, before then, been put into the hands of the printer at Edinburgh, I could not, at Aberdeen, avail myself of those hints, so easily as by making them the subject of notes which I could soon transmit to the printer, with directions in regard to the passages to which they refer. I was not a little surprised that I could find nothing in reply to my refutation of his abstract and metaphysical argument on the evidence of testimony displayed with so much ostentation in the first part of his Essay, the production of which argument, to the Public, seems to have been his principal motive for writing

on the subject. All his observations of any moment were levelled against the answers which had been given to his more familiar and popular topics employed in the second part.—The letter, which is addressed to Dr. Hugh Blair, Edinburgh, is as follows:

"SIR,

"I have perused the ingenious performance, which you was "so obliging as to put into my hands, with all the attention "possible; though not perhaps with all the seriousness and "gravity which you have so frequently recommended to me. "But the fault lies not in the piece, which is certainly very "acute, but in the subject. I know you will say it lies in nei- "ther, but in myself alone. If that be so, I am sorry to say "that I believe it is incurable.

"I could wish that your friend had not chosen to appear "as a controversial writer, but had endeavoured to establish his "principles, in general, without any reference to a particular "book or person; though I own he does me a great deal of "honour, in thinking that any thing I have wrote deserves his "attention: For besides many inconveniencies, which attends "that kind of writing, I see it is almost impossible to preserve "decency and good manners in it. This author, for instance, "says sometimes obliging things of me, much beyond what I "can presume to deserve; and I thence conclude, that in ge- "neral he did not mean to insult me: Yet I meet with some "other passages more worthy of Warburton and his followers, "than of so ingenious an author.

"But as I am not apt to lose my temper, and would still less "incline to do so with a friend of yours, I shall calmly com- "municate to you some remarks on the argument, since you "seem to desire it. I shall employ very few words, since a hint "will suffice to a gentleman of this author's penetration.

"Sect. 1. I would desire the author to consider, whether "the medium, by which we reason concerning human testimony, "be different from that which leads us to draw any inferences "concerning other human actions; that is, our knowledge of "human nature from experience? Or why it is different? I "suppose we conclude an honest man will not lie to us, in the

"same manner as we conclude that he will not cheat us. As "to the youthful propensity to believe, which is corrected by "experience; it seems obvious, that children adopt, blindfold, "all the opinions, principles, sentiments, and passions, of their "elders, as well as credit their testimony: Nor is this more "strange, than that a hammer should make an impression on "clay.

"Sect. 2. No man can have any other experience but his "own. The experience of others becomes his only by the "credit which he gives to their testimony; which proceeds from "his own experience of human nature.

"Sect. 3. There is no contradiction in saying, that all the "testimony which ever was really given for any miracle, or ever "will be given, is a subject of derision: And yet forming a fic- "tion or supposition of a testimony for a particular miracle, "which might not only merit attention, but amount to a full "proof of it. For instance, the absence of the sun during 48 "hours: But reasonable men would only conclude from this "fact, that the machine of the globe was disordered during the "time.

"Page 28. I find no difficulty to explain my meaning, and "yet shall not probably do it in any future edition. The proof "against a miracle, as it is founded on invariable experience, "is of that *species* or *kind* of proof, which is full and certain "when taken alone, because it implies no doubt, as is the case "with all probabilities; but there are degrees of this species, "and when a weaker proof is opposed to a stronger it is over- "come.

"Page 29. There is very little more delicacy in telling a "man he speaks nonsense by implication than in saying so di- "rectly.

"Sect. 4. Does a man of sense run after every silly tale of "witches, or hobgoblins, or fairies, and canvass particularly the "evidence? I never knew any one, that examined and deliberat- "ed about nonsense who did not believe it before the end of "his inquiries.

"Sect. 5. I wonder the author does not perceive the reason "why Mr. John Knox and Mr. Alexander Henderson did not "work as many miracles as their brethren in other churches,

"Miracle working was a popish trick, and discarded with the "other parts of that religion. Men must have new and oppo- "site ways of establishing new and opposite follies *. The "same reason extends to Mahomet. The Greek priests, who "were in the neighbourhood of Arabia, and many of them in "it, were as great miracle-workers as the Romish; and Maho- "met would have been laughed at for so stale and simple a de- "vice. To cast out devils, and cure the blind, where every "one almost can do as much, is not the way to get any extra- "ordinary ascendant over men †. I never read of a miracle in "my life, that was not meant to establish some new point of re- "ligion. There are no miracles wrought in Spain to prove the "gospel; but St. Francis Xavier wrought a thousand well at- "tested ones for that purpose in the Indies. The miracles in "Spain, which are also fully and completely attested, are wrought "to prove the efficacy of a particular crucifix or relict, which "is always a new point, or at least not universally received ‡.

"Sect. 6. If a miracle proves a doctrine to be revealed from "God, and consequently true, a miracle can never be wrought "for a contrary doctrine. The facts are therefore as incompa- "tible as the doctrines.

* On the observation, page 120, &c. that none of the Reformers, either abroad or at home, had ever pretended to the power of working miracles, notwithstanding the enthusiasm with which the Essayist charges them in his history, and notwithstanding the great facility which he affirms there is in this way of imposing upon mankind. To this he replies as above, "*I wonder the author does not perceive*," &c. My return to this will be found in a note in the Dissertation.

† The reply to the observation, with regard to Mahomet, will be found in the place referred to, partly in the text, and partly in the note at the bottom of the page.

‡ In page 94 of the former edition I had asserted, that the oracular predictions among the Pagans, and the pretended wonders performed by Capuchins and Friars, by itinerant or stationary teachers among the Roman Catholics, could not be denominated miracles ascribed to a new system of religion. This remark drew from Mr. Hume the reply as above. "*I never read*," &c. To this objection, the note on that passage is intended as an answer: Whether it be a sufficient one the reader will judge. In any event, he will, I persuade myself, do me the justice to own, that I have not weakened my adversary's plea by my manner of stating it. To avoid this, I have kept as close to the objector's own words, as I could properly, without naming and quoting him. Beside these observations, I hardly find any thing in the letter, having the appearance of argument, which affects my reasoning.

"I could wish your friend had not denominated me an in-
"fidel writer, on account of ten or twelve pages which seem to
"him to have that tendency: While I have wrote so many
"volumes on history, literature, politics, trade, morals, which,
"in that particular at least, are entirely inoffensive. Is a man
"to be called a drunkard because he has been fuddled once in
"his life time?

"Having said so much to your friend, who is certainly a
"very ingenious man, though a little too zealous for a philo-
"sopher; permit me also the freedom of saying a word to
"yourself. Whenever I have had the pleasure to be in your
"company, if the discourse turned upon any common subject
"of literature or reasoning, I always parted from you both en-
"tertained and instructed. But when the conversation was
"diverted by you from this channel towards the subject of
"your profession; though I doubt not but your intentions were
"very friendly towards me, I own I never received the same
"satisfaction: I was apt to be tired; and you to be angry.
"I would therefore wish for the future, wherever my good
"fortune throws me in your way, that these topics should be
"forborne between us. I have, long since, done with all in-
"quiries on such subjects, and am become incapable of instruc-
"tion; though I own no one is more capable of conveying it
"than yourself.

"After having given you the liberty of communicating to
"your friend what part of this letter you think proper, I re-
"main,

"Sir,

"Your most obedient humble Servant,

"David Hume."

It may not be improper, in order, as much as possible, to prevent misapprehensions, to add, that though I know that several pieces on the same subject have been published since the first edition of my Dissertation, I have not had the good fortune to see any of them, except one printed along with other Tracts by the late learned and accurate Dr. Price. There is one in particular by Dr. Farmer, which I have oftener than once inquired about, but have not yet been lucky enough to

meet with. This, perhaps is imputable to the lateness of my inquiries; for I acknowledge that I was so much engrossed by other studies at the time of its first appearing, that I did not think of reading more on that article, till an application to myself, for a new edition of the Dissertation, suggested the propriety of consulting what may have been written by learned men on the subject posterior to the first edition. From some other works I have read of Dr. Farmer's, I have reason to believe that the piece alluded to is both ingenious and acute; and from some account of it, which I remember to have perused in a Review, I have ground to suspect that his principles and mine on that subject do not in all things correspond. At the same time I recollect to have thought, when reading the account, that, on some points, the difference between us was more in expression than in sentiment. My only reason for mentioning this circumstance here, is to prevent the misconstruction of my silence in regard to him and other writers on the same subject, whose sentiments may either coincide with mine, or stand in opposition to them. My silence in such cases proceeds neither from *contempt* nor from *policy*. They will come nearer the truth, and do me more justice, who shall ascribe it to *ignorance*.

I shall only add, with respect to the gentleman who did me the honour to translate my Dissertation into French, that though, upon the whole, he has acquitted himself admirably of the task he had undertaken, and has, in many things, improved upon his original, there are a few places in which he seems not perfectly to have apprehended my meaning. The cause of his mistake I find to have sometimes been an ambiguity or obscurity in the English expression I had employed. In such cases I have endeavoured to correct the fault in this edition, and give to the diction all the perspicuity possible. There is no quality in style more important, whatever be the subject; but in argumentative writings it is indispensable.

INTRODUCTION.

"CHRISTIANITY," it has been said, "is not founded in argument." If it were only meant by these words, that the religion of Jesus could not, by the single aid of reasoning, produce its full effect upon the heart; every true Christian would cheerfully subscribe to them. No arguments, unaccompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit, can convert the soul from sin to God; though even, to such conversion, arguments are, by the agency of the Spirit, rendered subservient. Again, if we were to understand, by this aphorism, that the principles of our religion could never have been discovered by the natural and unassisted faculties of man; this position, I presume, would be as little disputed as the former. But if, on the contrary, under the cover of an ambiguous expression, it is intended to insinuate, that those principles, from their very nature, can admit no rational evidence of their truth, (and this, by the way, is the only meaning which can avail our antagonists) the gospel, as well as common sense, loudly reclaims against it.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST, the author of our religion, often argued, both with his disciples and with his adversaries, as with reasonable men, on the principles of reason. Without this faculty, he well knew, they could not be susceptible either of religion, or of law. He argued from prophecy, and the conformity of the event to the prediction *. He argued from the testimony of John the Baptist, who was generally acknowledged to be a prophet †. He argued from the miracles which he himself performed ‡, as uncontrovertible evidences, that God Almighty operated by him, and had sent him. He expostulates with his enemies, for not using their reason on this subject.

* Luke xxiv. 25, &c. John v. 39. and 46.
† John v. 32, 33.
‡ John v. 36. x. 25, 37, 38. xiv. 10, 11.

Why, says he, *even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right* *? In like manner we are called upon by the apostles of our Lord, to act the part of *wise men*, and *judge* impartially of *what* they *say* †. Those who do so, are highly commended for the candour and prudence they discover in an affair of so great consequence ‡. We are even commanded, to be *always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh* us *a reason of* our *hope* §; *in meekness to instruct them that oppose themselves* ‖; and *earnestly* to *contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints* **. God has neither, in natural nor in revealed religion, *left himself without witness*; but has in both given moral and external evidence, sufficient to convince the impartial, to silence the gainsayer, and to render inexcusable the atheist and the unbeliever. This evidence it is our duty to attend to, and candidly to examine. We must *prove all things*, as we are expressly enjoined in holy writ, if we would ever hope to *hold fast that which is good* ††.

Thus much I thought proper to premise, not to serve as an apology for the design of this tract, (the design surely needs no apology, whatever the world may judge of the execution) but to expose the shallowness of that pretext, under which the advocates for infidelity, in this age, commonly take shelter. Whilst therefore we enforce an argument, which, in support of our religion, was so frequently insisted on by its divine founder, we will not dread the reproachful titles of *dangerous friends*, or *disguised enemies* of revelation. Such are the titles, which the writer, whose sentiments I propose in these papers to canvass, has bestowed on his antagonists ‡‡; not, I believe, through malice against them, but as a sort of excuse for himself, or at least a handle for introducing a very strange and unmeaning compliment to the religion of his country, after a very bold attempt to undermine it. We will however do him the justice to own, that he hath put it out of our power to retort the charge. No intelligent person, who hath carefully perused the *Essay on Miracles*, will impute to the author either of those ignominious characters.

* Luke xii. 57. † 1 Cor. x. 15. ‡ Acts xvii. 11.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 15. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 25. ** Jude 3.
†† 1 Thess. v. 21. ‡‡ Page 201.

My *primary* intention in undertaking an answer to the aforesaid Essay, hath invariably been to contribute all in my power to the defence of a *religion*, which I esteem the greatest blessing conferred by Heaven on the sons of men. It is at the same time a *secondary* motive of considerable weight, to vindicate *philosophy*, at least that most important branch of it which ascertains the rules of reasoning, from those absurd consequences which this author's theory naturally leads us to. The theme is arduous. The adversary is both subtle and powerful. With such an adversary, I should on very unequal terms enter the lists, had I not the advantage of being on the side of truth. And an eminent advantage this doubtless is, as it requires but moderate abilities to speak in defence of a good cause. A good cause demands but a distinct exposition and a fair hearing; and we may say with great propriety, it will speak for itself. But to adorn error with the semblance of truth, and *make the worse appear the better reason*, requires all the arts of ingenuity and invention; arts in which few or none have been more expert than Mr. Hume. It is much to be regretted, that on some occasions he has so ill applied them.

A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

PART I.

MIRACLES ARE CAPABLE OF PROOF FROM TESTIMONY, AND RELIGIOUS MIRACLES ARE NOT LESS CAPABLE OF THIS EVIDENCE THAN OTHERS.

SECTION I.

Mr. Hume's favourite argument is founded on a false hypothesis.

It is not the aim of this author to evince, that miracles, if admitted to be true, would not be a sufficient evidence of a divine mission. His design is solely to prove that miracles which have not been the objects of our own senses, at least such as are said to have been performed in attestation of any religious system, cannot reasonably be admitted by us, or believed on the testimony of others. 'A miracle,' says he, 'supported by any 'human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than 'of argument *.' Again, in the conclusion of his essay, 'Upon the whole, it appears, that no testimony for *any kind* of 'miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less 'to a proof †.' Here he concludes against all miracles. '*Any* '*kind* of miracle' are his express words. He seems however immediately sensible, that, in asserting this, he has gone too far; and therefore, in the end of the same paragraph, retracts part of what he had advanced in the beginning. 'We may

* Page 194. † Page 202.—See Preface, p. 2.

'establish it as a maxim, that no human testimony can have such 'force, as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for 'any system of religion.' In the note on this passage, he has these words: 'I beg the limitation here made, may be remarked, 'when I say, that a miracle can never be proved, so as to be 'the foundation of a system of religion. For I own that other-'wise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual 'course of nature, of such a kind, as to admit of proof from 'human testimony.'

So much for that cardinal point, which the essayist labours so strenuously to evince; and which if true, will not only be subversive of revelation, as received by us, on the testimony of the apostles, and prophets, and martyrs; but will directly lead to this general conclusion: 'That it is impossible for God Al-'mighty to give a revelation, attended with such evidence, that 'it can be reasonably believed in after-ages, or even in the 'same age, by any person who hath not been an eye-witness 'of the miracles, by which it is supported.'

Now by what wonderful process of reasoning is this strange conclusion made out? Several topics have been employed for the purpose by this subtle disputant. Among these there is one principal argument, which he is at great pains to set off to the best advantage. Here indeed he claims a particular concern, having discovered it himself. His title to the honour of the discovery, it is not my business to controvert; I confine myself entirely to the consideration of its importance. To this end I shall now lay before the reader, the unanswerable argument, as he flatters himself it will be found; taking the freedom, for brevity's sake, to compendize the reasoning, and to omit whatever is said merely for illustration. To do otherwise would lay me under the necessity of transcribing the greater part of the essay.

'Experience,' says he, 'is our only guide in reasoning con-'cerning matters of fact *. Experience is in some things va-'riable, in some things uniform. A variable experience gives 'rise only to probability; an uniform experience amounts to 'a proof †. Probability always supposes an opposition of ex-'periments and observations, where the one side is found to 'overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence

* Page 174. † Page 175, 176.

'proportioned to the superiority. In such cases we must ba-
'lance the opposite experiments, and deduct the lesser number
'from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the supe-
'rior evidence *. Our belief or assurance of any fact, from the
'report of eye-witnesses, is derived from no other principle than
'experience; that is, our observation of the veracity of human
'testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports
'of witnesses †. Now if the fact attested partakes of the mar-
'vellous, if it is such as has seldom fallen under our observa-
'tion, here is a contest of two opposite experiences, of which
'the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the
'superior can only operate on the mind by the force which re-
'mains. The very same principle of experience, which gives
'us a certain degree of assurance, in the testimony of witnesses,
'gives us also, in this case, another degree of assurance, against
'the fact which they endeavour to establish; from which con-
'tradiction, there necessarily arises a counterpoise, and mutual
'destruction of belief and authority ‡. Further, if the fact af-
'firmed by the witnesses, instead of being only marvellous, is
'really miraculous; if besides, the testimony considered apart
'and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case there is
'proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but
'still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its
'antagonist. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature;
'and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these
'laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the
'fact, is as entire, as any argument from experience can possi-
'bly be imagined §. And if so, it is an undeniable conse-
'quence, that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever
'from testimony. A miracle therefore, however attested, can
'never be rendered credible, even in the lowest degree.' This, in my apprehension, is the sum of the argument, on which my ingenious opponent rests the strength of his cause.

In answer to this I propose first to prove, that the whole is built upon a false hypothesis. That the evidence of testimony is derived solely from experience, which seems to be an axiom of this writer, is at least not so incontestible a truth as he sup-

* Page 176. † Ibid. ‡ Page 179. § Page 180.

poses it; that, on the contrary, testimony has a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience, will, I imagine, easily be evinced. For this purpose let it be remarked, that the earliest assent, which is given to testimony by children, and which is previous to all experience, is in fact the most unlimited; that by a gradual experience of mankind, it is gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds. To say therefore that our diffidence in testimony is the result of experience, is more philosophical, because more consonant to truth, than to say that our faith in testimony has this foundation. Accordingly youth, which is unexperienced, is credulous; age, on the contrary, is distrustful. Exactly the reverse would be the case, were this author's doctrine just.

Perhaps it will be said, If experience is allowed to be the only measure of a logical or reasonable faith in testimony, the question, *Whether the influence of testimony on belief, be original or derived?* if it be not merely verbal, is at least of no importance in the present controversy. But I maintain it is of the greatest importance. The difference between us is by no means so inconsiderable, as to a careless view it may appear. According to his philosophy, the presumption is against the testimony, or (which amounts to the same thing) there is not the smallest presumption in its favour, till properly supported by experience. According to the explication given above, there is the strongest presumption in favour of the testimony, till properly refuted by experience.

If it be objected by the author, that such a faith in testimony as is prior to experience, must be unreasonable and unphilosophical, because unaccountable; I should reply, that there are, and must be, in human nature, some original grounds of belief, beyond which our researches cannot proceed, and of which therefore it is vain to attempt a rational account. I should desire the objector to give a reasonable account of his faith in this principle, that *similar causes always produce similar effects*; or in this, that *the course of nature will be the same to-morrow, that it was yesterday, and is to-day*: Principles, which he himself acknowledges, are neither intuitively evident, nor deduced from premises; and which nevertheless we are under a necessity

of presupposing, in all our reasonings from experience *. I should desire him to give a reasonable account of his faith in the clearest informations of his memory, which he will find it alike impossible either to doubt, or to explain. Indeed memory bears nearly the same relation to experience, that testimony does. Certain it is that the defects and misrepresentations of memory are often corrected by experience. Yet should any person hence infer, that memory derives all its evidence from experience, he would fall into a manifest absurdity. For, on the contrary, experience derives its origin solely from memory, and is nothing else but the general maxims or conclusions, we have formed, from the comparison of particular facts remembered. If we had not previously given an implicit faith to memory, we had never been able to acquire experience. When therefore we say that memory, which gives birth to experience, may nevertheless, in some instances, be corrected by experience, no more is implied, but that the inferences, formed from the most lively and perspicuous reports of memory, sometimes serve to rectify the mistakes which arise from such reports of this faculty, as are most languid and confused. Thus memory, in these instances, may be said to correct itself. The case is often much the same with experience and testimony, as will appear more clearly in the second section, where I shall consider the ambiguity of the word *experience*, as used by this author.

But how, says Mr. Hume, is testimony then to be refuted? Principally in one or other of these two ways:—*first*, And most directly, by contradictory testimony; that is, when an equal or greater number of witnesses, equally or more credible, attest the contrary: *secondly*, By such evidence, either of the incapacity or of the bad character of the witnesses, as is sufficient to discredit them. What, rejoins my antagonist, cannot then testimony be confuted by the extraordinary nature of the fact attested? Has this consideration no weight at all? That this consideration has no weight at all, it was never my intention to maintain; that by itself it can very rarely, if ever, amount to a refutation against ample and unexceptionable testimony, I hope to make extremely plain. Who has ever denied, that the un-

* Sceptical Doubts. Part. 2.

commonness of an event related, is a presumption against its reality; and that chiefly on account of the tendency, which, experience teaches us, and this author has observed, some people have to sacrifice truth to the love of wonder *? The question only is, How far does this presumption extend? In the extent which Mr. Hume has assigned it, he has greatly exceeded the limits of nature, and consequently of all just reasoning.

In his opinion, 'When the fact attested is such as has seldom fallen under our observation, there is a contest of two opposite experiences, of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind, by the force which remains †.'—There is a metaphysical, I had almost said, a magical *balance* and *arithmetic*, for the weighing and subtracting of evidence, to which he frequently recurs, and with which he seems to fancy he can perform wonders. I wish he had been a little more explicit in teaching us how these rare inventions must be used. When a writer of genius and elocution expresses himself in general terms, he will find it an easy matter to give a plausible appearance to things the most unintelligible in nature. Such sometimes is this author's way of writing. In the instance before us, he is particularly happy in his choice of metaphors. They are such as are naturally adapted to prepossess a reader in his favour. What candid person can think of suspecting the impartiality of an inquirer, who is for *weighing* in the *scales* of reason, all the arguments on both sides? Who can suspect his exactness who determines every thing by a *numerical computation*? Hence it is, that to a superficial view his reasoning appears scarcely inferior to demonstration; but, when narrowly canvassed, it is impracticable to find an application, of which, in a consistency with good sense, it is capable.

In confirmation of the remark just now made, let us try how his manner of arguing on this point can be applied to a particular instance. For this purpose I make the following supposition. I have lived for some years near a ferry. It consists with my knowledge, that the passage-boat has a thousand times crossed the river, and as many times returned safe. An unknown man, whom I have just now met, tells me, in a serious

* Page 184. † Page 179.

manner, that it is lost; and affirms, that he himself, standing on the bank, was a spectator of the scene; that he saw the passengers carried down the stream, and the boat overwhelmed. No person, who is influenced in his judgment of things, not by philosophical subtilties, but by common sense, a much surer guide, will hesitate to declare, that in such a testimony I have probable evidence of the fact asserted. But if leaving common sense, I shall recur to metaphysics, and submit to be tutored in my way of judging by the essayist, he will remind me, 'that there is here a contest of two opposite experiences, of 'which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and 'the superior can only operate on the mind by the force which 'remains.' I am warned, that 'the very same principle of ex-'perience, which gives me a certain degree of assurance in the 'testimony of the witness, gives me also, in this case, another de-'gree of assurance, against the fact, which he endeavours to esta-'blish, from which contradiction there arises a counterpoise, and 'mutual destruction of belief and authority *.' Well, I would know the truth, if possible; and that I may conclude fairly and philosophically, how must I balance these opposite experiences, as you are pleased to term them? Must I set the thousand, or rather the two thousand instances of the one side, against the single instance of the other? In that case, it is easy to see, I have nineteen hundred and ninety-nine degrees of evidence, that my information is false. Or is it necessary, in order to make it credible, that the single instance have two thousand times as much evidence, as any of the opposite instances, supposing them equal among themselves; or supposing them unequal, as much as all the two thousand put together, that there may be at least an equilibrium? This is impossible. I had for some of those instances, the evidence of sense, which hardly any testimony can equal, much less exceed. Once more, must the evidence I have of the veracity of the witness, be a full equivalent to the two thousand instances, which oppose the fact attested? By the supposition, I have no positive evidence for or against his veracity, he being a person whom I never saw before. Yet if none of these be the balancing, which the essay-writer means, I despair of being able to discover his meaning.

* Page 179.

Is then so weak a proof from testimony incapable of being refuted? I am far from thinking so; though even so weak a proof could not be overturned by such a contrary experience. How then may it be overturned? *First*, By contradictory testimony. Going homewards I met another person, whom I know as little as I did the former; finding that he comes from the ferry, I ask him concerning the truth of the report. He affirms, that the whole is a fiction; that he saw the boat, and all in it, come safe to land. This would do more to turn the scale, than fifty thousand such contrary instances, as were supposed. Yet this would not remove suspicion. Indeed, if we were to consider the matter abstractly, one would think, that all suspicion would be removed, that the two opposite testimonies would destroy each other, and leave the mind entirely under the influence of its former experience, in the same state as if neither testimony had been given. But this is by no means consonant to fact. When once testimonies are introduced, former experience is generally of no account in the reckoning; it is but like the dust of the balance, which hath not any sensible effect upon the scales. The mind hangs in suspense between the two contrary declarations, and considers it as one to one, or equal in probability, that the report is true, or that it is false. Afterwards a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, confirm the declaration of the second. I am then quite at ease. Is this the only effectual way of confuting false testimony? No. I suppose *again*, that instead of meeting with any person who can inform me concerning the fact, I get from some, who are acquainted with the witness, information concerning his character. They tell me, he is notorious for lying; and that his lies are commonly forged, not with a view to interest, but merely to gratify a malicious pleasure, which he takes in alarming strangers. This, though not so direct a refutation as the former, will be sufficient to discredit his report. In the former, where there is testimony contradicting testimony, the author's metaphor of a balance may be used with propriety. The things weighed are homogenial: And when contradictory evidences are presented to the mind, tending to prove positions which cannot be both true, the mind must decide on the comparative strength of the opposite evidences, before it yield to either.

But is this the case in the supposition first made? By no means. The two thousand instances formerly known, and the single instance attested, as they relate to different facts, though of a contrary nature, are not contradictory. There is no inconsistency in believing both. There is no inconsistency in receiving the last on weaker evidence, (if it be sufficient evidence) not only than all the former together, but even than any of them singly. Will it be said, that though the former instances are not themselves contradictory to the fact recently attested, they lead to a conclusion that is contradictory? I answer, It is true, that the experienced frequency of the conjunction of any two events, leads the mind to infer a similar conjunction in time to come. But let it at the same time be remarked, that no man considers this inference, as having equal evidence with any one of those past events, on which it is founded, and for the belief of which we have had sufficient testimony. Before then the method recommended by this author can turn to any account, it will be necessary for him to compute and determine, with precision, how many hundreds, how many thousands, I might say how many myriads of instances, will confer such evidence on the conclusion founded on them, as will prove an equipoise for the testimony of one occular witness, a man of probity, in a case of which he is allowed to be a competent judge.

There is in *arithmetic* a rule called REDUCTION, by which numbers of different denominations are brought to the same denomination. If this ingenious author shall invent a rule in *logic*, analogous to this, for reducing different classes of evidence to the same class, he will bless the world with a most important discovery. Then indeed he will have the honour to establish an everlasting peace in the republic of letters; then we shall have the happiness to see controversy of every kind, theological, historical, philosophical, receive its mortal wound: for though, in every question, we could not even then determine, with certainty, on which side the truth lay, we could always determine (and that is the utmost the nature of the thing admits) with as much accuracy as geometry and algebra can afford, on which side the probability lay, and in what degree. But till this metaphysical *reduction* be discovered, it will be impossible, where the evidences are of different orders, to ascertain by *subtrac-*

tion the superior evidence. We could not but esteem him a novice in arithmetic, who being asked, whether seven pounds or eleven pence make the greater sum, and what is the difference? should, by attending solely to the numbers, and overlooking the value, conclude that eleven pence were the greater, and that it exceeded the other by four. Must we not be equal novices in reasoning, if we follow the same method? Must we not fall into as great blunders? Of as little significancy do we find the balance. Is the value of things heterogeneal to be determined merely by weight? Shall silver be weighed against lead, or copper against iron? If, in exchange for a piece of gold, I were offered some counters of baser metal, is it not obvious, that till I know the comparative value of the metals, in vain shall I attempt to find what is equivalent, by the assistance either of scales or of arithmetic?

It is an excellent observation, and much to the purpose, which the late learned and pious Bishop of Durham, in his admirable performance on the analogy of religion to the course of nature, hath made on this subject. 'There is a very strong 'presumption,' says he, 'against the most ordinary facts, before 'the proof of them, which yet is overcome by almost any proof. 'There is a presumption of millions to one against the story of 'Cæsar, or of any other man. For suppose a number of com-'mon facts, so and so circumstanced, of which one had no kind 'of proof, should happen to come into one's thoughts, every 'one would, without any possible doubt, conclude them to be 'false. The like may be said of a single common fact*.' What then, I may subjoin, shall be said of an uncommon fact? And that an uncommon fact may be proved by testimony, has not *yet* been made a question. But, in order to illustrate the observation above cited, suppose, first, one at random mentions, that at such an hour, of such a day, in such a part of the heavens, a comet *will* appear; the conclusion from experience would not be as millions, but as infinite to one, that the proposition is false. Instead of this, suppose you have the testimony of but one occular witness, a man of integrity, and skilled in astronomy, that at such an hour, of such a day, in such a part of the heavens, a comet *did* appear; you will not hesitate one mo-

* Part 2. Chap. 2. § 3.

ment to give him credit. Yet all the presumption that was against the truth of the first supposition, though almost as strong evidence as experience can afford, was also against the truth of the second, before it was thus attested.

Is it necessary to urge further, in support of this doctrine, that as the water in the canal cannot be made to rise higher than the fountain whence it flows, so it is impossible, that the evidence of testimony, if it proceeded from experience, should ever exceed that of experience, which is its source? Yet that it greatly exceeds this evidence, appears not only from what has been observed already, but still more from what I shall have occasion to observe in the sequel. One may safely affirm, that no conceivable conclusion from experience, can possess stronger evidence, than that which ascertains us of the regular succession and duration of day and night. The reason is, the instances on which this experience is founded, are both without number and without exception. Yet even this conclusion, the author admits, as we shall see in the third section, may, in a particular instance, not only be surmounted, but even annihilated by testimony.

Lastly, let it be observed, that the immediate conclusion from experience is always *general*, and runs thus: 'This is the 'ordinary course of nature.' 'Such an event may reasonably 'be expected, where all the circumstances are entirely similar.' But when we descend to particulars, the conclusion becomes weaker, being more indirect. For though all the *known* circumstances be similar, all the *actual* circumstances may not be similar; nor is it possible in any case to be assured (our knowledge of things being at best but superficial) that all the *actual* circumstances are *known* to us. On the contrary, the direct conclusion from testimony is always *particular*, and runs thus: 'This is the fact in such an individual instance.' The remark now made will serve both to throw light on some of the preceding observations, and to indicate the proper sphere of each species of evidence. *Experience* of the past is the only rule whereby we can judge concerning the *future*: And as when the sun is below the horizon, we must do the best we can by the light of the moon, or even of the stars; so in all cases where we have no testimony, we are under a necessity of recurring to expe-

rience, and of balancing or numbering contrary observations *. But the evidence resulting hence, even in the clearest cases, is acknowledged to be so weak, compared with that which results from testimony, that the strongest conviction, built merely on the former, may be overturned by the slightest proof exhibited by the latter. Accordingly the future has, in all ages and nations, been denominated the province of conjecture and uncertainty.

FROM what has been said, the attentive reader will easily discover, that the author's argument against *miracles*, has not the least affinity to the argument used by Dr. Tillotson against *transubstantiation*, with which Mr. Hume has introduced his subject. Let us hear the argument, as it is related in the essay, from the writings of the Archbishop. 'It is acknowledged on 'all hands,' says that learned prelate, 'that the authority either

* Wherever such balancing or numbering can take place, the opposite evidences must be entirely similar. It will rarely assist us in judging of facts supported by testimony; for even where contradictory testimonies come to be considered, you will hardly find, that the characters of the witnesses on the opposite sides are so precisely equal, as that an arithmetical operation will evolve the credibility. In matters of pure experience it has often place. Hence the computations that have been made of the value of annuities, insurances, and several other commercial articles. In calculations concerning chances, the degree of probability may be determined with mathematical exactness. I shall here take the liberty, though the matter be not essential to the design of this tract, to correct an oversight in the essayist, who always supposes, that where contrary evidences must be balanced, the probability lies in the remainder or surplus, when the less number is subtracted from the greater. The probability does not consist in the surplus, but in the ratio, or geometrical proportion, which the numbers on the opposite sides bear to each other. I explain myself thus. In favour of one supposed event, there are 100 similar instances, against it 50. In another case under consideration, the favourable instances are 60, and only 10 unfavourable. Though the difference, or arithmetical proportion, which is 50, be the same in both cases, the probability is by no means equal, as the author's way of reasoning implies. The probability of the first event is as 100 to 50, or 2 to 1. The probability of the second is as 60 to 10, or 6 to 1. Consequently on comparing the different examples, though both be probable, the second is thrice as probable as the first. I am sensible that the precise degree of probability is not entirely determined, even by the ratio. There are other circumstances to be considered where the utmost accuracy is requisite: But it does not appear necessary, in the present inquiry, to enter deeper into the subject. See Dr. Price's Dissertation, Sect. II.

'of the scripture or of tradition, is founded merely on the testi-
'mony of the apostles, who were eye-witnesses to those miracles
'of our Saviour, by which he proved his divine mission. Our
'evidence then for the truth of the Christian religion is less than
'the evidence for the truth of our senses; because even in the
'first authors of our religion it was no greater; and it is evi-
'dent, it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples;
'nor can any one be so certain of the truth of their testimony,
'as of the immediate objects of his senses. But a weaker evi-
'dence can never destroy a stronger; and therefore, were the
'doctrine of the real presence ever so clearly revealed in scrip-
'ture, it were directly contrary to the rules of just reasoning to
'give our assent to it. It contradicts sense, though both the
'scripture and tradition, on which it is supposed to be built,
'carry not such evidence with them as sense, when they are con-
'sidered merely as external evidences, and are not brought home
'to every one's breast by the immediate operation of the Holy
'Spirit *.' That the evidence of *testimony* is less than the evidence of *sense*, is undeniable.——*Sense* is the source of that evidence, which is first transferred to the *memory* of the individual, as to a general reservoir, and thence transmitted to others by the channel of *testimony*. That the original evidence can never gain any thing, but must lose, by the transmission, is beyond dispute. What has been rightly perceived may be misremembered; what is rightly remembered may, through incapacity, or through ill intention, be misreported; and what is rightly reported may be misunderstood. In any of these four ways therefore, either by defect of memory, of elocution, or of veracity in the relater, or by misapprehension in the hearer, there is a chance, that the truth received by the information of the senses, may be misrepresented or mistaken; now every such chance, occasions a real diminution of the evidence. That the sacramental elements are bread and wine, not flesh and blood, our sight and touch and taste and smell concur in testifying. If these senses are not to be credited, the apostles themselves could not have evidence of the mission of their master. For the greatest external evidence they had, or could have, of his mission, was that which their senses gave them, of the reality

* Page 173, 174.

of his miracles. But whatever strength there is in this argument, with regard to the apostles, the argument, with regard to us, who, for those miracles, have only the evidence, not of our own senses, but of their testimony, is incomparably stronger. In their case, it is sense contradicting sense; in ours, it is sense contradicting testimony. But what relation has this to the author's argument? None at all. Testimony, it is acknowledged, is a weaker evidence than sense. But it has been already evinced, that its evidence for particular facts is infinitely stronger than that which the general conclusions from experience can afford us. Testimony holds directly of memory and sense. Whatever is duly attested must be remembered by the witness; whatever is duly remembered must once have been perceived. But nothing similar takes place with regard to experience, nor can testimony, with any appearance of meaning, be said to hold of it.

THUS I have shown, as I proposed, that the author's reasoning proceeds on a false hypothesis.—It supposes testimony to derive its evidence solely from experience, which is false.—It supposes by consequence, that contrary observations have a weight in opposing testimony, which the first and most acknowledged principles of human reason, or, if you like the term better, common sense, evidently shows that they have not.—It assigns a rule for discovering the superiority of contrary evidences, which, in the latitude there given it, tends to mislead the judgment, and which it is impossible, by any explication, to render of real use.

SECTION II.

Mr. Hume charged with some fallacies in his way of managing the argument.

IN the essay there is frequent mention of the word *experience*, and much use made of it. It is strange that the author has not favoured us with the definition of a term of so much moment to

his argument. This defect I shall endeavour to supply; and the rather, as the word appears to be equivocal, and to be used by the essayist in two very different senses. The first and most proper signification of the word, which, for distinction's sake, I shall call *personal* experience, is that given in the preceding section. 'It is,' as was observed, 'founded in *memory*, 'and consists solely of the general maxims or conclusions that 'each individual hath formed from the comparison of the parti-'cular facts remembered by him.' In the other signification, in which the word is sometimes taken, and which I shall distinguish by the term *derived*, it may be thus defined. 'It is 'founded in *testimony*, and consists not only of all the experiences 'of others, which have, through that channel, been communi-'cated to us, but of all the general maxims or conclusions we 'have formed, from the comparison of particular facts attested.'

In proposing his argument, the author would surely be understood to mean only *personal* experience; otherwise, his making testimony derive its light from an experience which derives its light from testimony, would be introducing what logicians term a *circle in causes*. It would exhibit the same things alternately, as causes and effects of each other. Yet nothing can be more limited, than the sense which is conveyed under the term *experience*, in the first acceptation. The merest clown or peasant derives incomparably more knowledge from testimony, and the communicated experience of others, than in the longest life he could have amassed out of the treasure of his own memory. Nay, to such a scanty portion the savage himself is not confined. If that therefore must be the rule, the only rule, by which every testimony is ultimately to be judged, our belief in matters of fact must have very narrow bounds. No testimony ought to have any weight with us, that does not relate an event, similar at least to some one observation, which we ourselves have made. For example, that there are such people on the earth as negroes, could not, on that hypothesis, be rendered credible to one who had never seen a negro, not even by the most numerous and the most unexceptionable attestations. Against the admission of such testimony, however strong, the whole force of the author's argument evidently operates. But that innumerable absurdities would flow

from this principle, I might easily evince, did I not think the task superfluous.

The author himself is aware of the consequences; and therefore, in whatever sense he uses the term *experience* in proposing his argument; in prosecuting it, he, with great dexterity, shifts the sense, and, ere the reader is apprised, insinuates another. 'It is a miracle,' says he, 'that a dead man should 'come to life, because that has never been observed in any age 'or country. There must therefore be an uniform experience 'against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not 'merit that appellation *.' Here the phrase, *an uniform experience against an event*, in the latter clause, is implicitly defined in the former, not what has never been observed BY US, but (mark his words) *what has never been observed* IN ANY AGE OR COUNTRY. Now, what has been observed, and what has not been observed, in all ages and countries, pray how can you, Sir, or I, or any man, come to the knowledge of? Only I suppose by testimony, oral or written. The personal experience of every individual is limited to but a part of one age, and commonly to a narrow spot of one country. If there be any other way of being made acquainted with facts, it is to me, I own, an impenetrable secret; I have no apprehension of it. If there be not any, What shall we make of that cardinal point, on which your argument turns? It is in plain language, 'Testi-'mony is not entitled to the least degree of faith, but as far as 'it is supported by such an extensive experience, as if we had 'not had a previous and independent faith in testimony, we could 'never have acquired.'

How natural is the transition from one sophism to another! You will soon be convinced of this, if you attend but a little to the strain of the argument. 'A miracle,' says he, 'is a viola-'tion of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable expe-'rience hath established these laws, the proof against a miracle 'is as entire, as any argument from experience can possibly be 'imagined †.' Again, 'As an uniform experience amounts to 'a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature 'of the fact, against the existence of any miracle ‡.' I must

* Page 181. † Page 180. ‡ Page 181.

once ask the author, What is the precise meaning of the words *firm, unalterable, uniform?* An experience that admits no exception, is surely the only experience, which can with propriety be termed *uniform, firm, unalterable.* Now since, as was remarked above, the far greater part of this experience, which comprises every age and every country, must be derived to us from testimony; that the experience may be *firm, uniform, unalterable,* there must be no contrary testimony whatever. Yet by the author's own hypothesis, the miracles he would thus confute, are supported by testimony. At the same time, to give strength to his argument, he is under a necessity of supposing, that there is no exception from the testimonies against them. Thus he falls into that paralogism, which is called *begging the question.* What he gives with one hand, he takes with the other. He admits, in opening his design, what in his argument he implicitly denies.

But that this, if possible, may be still more manifest, let us attend a little to some expressions, which one would imagine he had inadvertently dropt. 'So long,' says he, 'as the world 'endures, I presume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies 'be found in all profane history *.' Why does he presume so? A man so much attached to experience, can hardly be suspected to have any other reason than this; because such accounts have hitherto been found in all the histories, profane as well as sacred, of times past. But we need not recur to an inference to obtain this acknowledgment. It is often to be met with in the essay. In one place we learn, that the witnesses for miracles are an infinite number †; in another, that all religious records of whatever kind abound with them ‡. I leave it therefore to the author to explain, with what consistency he can assert, that the laws of nature are established by an uniform experience, (which experience is chiefly the result of testimony) and at the same time allow, that almost all human histories are full of the relations of miracles and prodigies, which are violations of those laws. Here is, by his own confession, testimony against testimony, and very ample on both sides. How then

* Page 174. In the edition of the Essay, 1767, mentioned in the Preface, his words are, 'In all history, sacred and profane.'.

† Page 190. ‡ Page 191.

can one side claim a firm, uniform, and unalterable support from testimony?

It will be in vain to object, that the testimony in support of the laws of nature, greatly exceeds the testimony for the violations of these laws; and that, if we are to be determined by the greater number of observations, we shall reject all miracles whatever. I ask, Why are the testimonies much more numerous in the one case than in the other? The answer is obvious: Natural occurrences are much more frequent than such as are preternatural. But are all the accounts we have of the pestilence to be rejected as incredible, because, in this country, we hear not so often of that disease, as of the fever? Or, because the number of natural births is infinitely greater than that of monsters, shall the evidence of the former be regarded as a confutation of all that can be advanced in proof of the latter? Such an objector needs to be reminded of what was proved in the foregoing section; that the opposite testimonies relate to different facts, and are therefore not contradictory; that the conclusion founded on them, possesses not the evidence of the facts on which it is founded, but only such a presumptive evidence, as may be surmounted by the slightest positive proof. A general conclusion from experience is in comparison but presumptive and indirect; sufficient testimony for a particular fact is direct and positive evidence.

I shall remark one other fallacy in this author's reasoning, before I conclude this section. 'The Indian prince,' says he, 'who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost, reasoned justly; and it naturally required very 'strong testimony to engage his assent to facts, which arose 'from a state of nature, with which he was unacquainted, and 'bore so little analogy to those events, of which he had had 'constant and uniform experience. Though they were not 'contrary to his experience, they were not conformable to it *.' Here a distinction is artfully suggested, between what is *contrary* to experience, and what is *not conformable* to it. The latter he allows may be proved by testimony, but not the former. A distinction, for which the author seems to have so great use, it will not be improper to examine.

* Page 179.

If my reader happen to be but little acquainted with Mr. Hume's writings, or even with the piece here examined, I must intreat him, ere he proceed any farther, to give the essay an attentive perusal; and to take notice, particularly, whether, in one single passage, he can find any other sense given to the terms *contrary to experience*, but that which has *not* been *experienced*. Without this aid, I should not be surprised, that I found it difficult to convince the judicious, that a man of so much acuteness, one so much a philosopher as this author, should, with such formality, make a distinction, which not only the essay, but the whole tenour of his philosophical writings, shows evidently to have no meaning. Is that which is contrary to experience a synonymous phrase for that which implies a contradiction? If this were the case, there would be no need to recur to experience for a refutation; it would refute itself. But it is equitable that the author himself be heard, who ought to be the best interpreter of his own words. 'When the fact attested,' says he, 'is such a one as has seldom fallen under 'our observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences *.' In this passage, not the being *never* experienced, but even the being *seldom* experienced, constitutes an *opposite* experience. I can conceive no way but one, that the author can evade the force of this quotation; and that is, by obtruding on us some new distinction between an *opposite* and a *contrary* experience. In order to preclude such an attempt, I shall once more recur to his own authority. 'It is no miracle that a man 'in seeming good health, should die of a sudden.' Why? 'Because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any 'other, hath yet been frequently observed to happen. But it 'is a miracle that a dead man should come to life.' Why? Not because of any inconsistency in the thing. That a body should be this hour inanimate, and the next animated, is no more inconsistent, than the reverse, that it should be this hour animated, and the next inanimate; though the one be common, and not the other. But the author himself answers the question: 'Because that has never been observed in any age or 'country †.' All the contrariety then that there is in miracles to experience, does, by his own concession, consist solely in this,

* Page 179. † Page 181.

that they have never been observed; that is, they are not conformable to experience. To his experience, personal or derived, he must certainly mean; to what he has learned of different ages and countries. To speak beyond the knowledge he has attained, would be ridiculous. It would be first supposing a miracle, and then inferring a contrary experience, instead of concluding, from experience, that the fact is miraculous.

Now, I insist, that, as far as regards the author's argument, a fact perfectly unusual, or not conformable to our experience, such a fact as, for aught we know, was never observed in any age or country, is as incapable of proof from testimony as miracles are; that, if this writer would argue consistently, he could never, on his own principles, reject one, and admit the other. Both ought to be rejected, or neither. I would not, by this, be thought to signify, that there is no difference between a miracle and an extraordinary event. I know that the former implies the interposal of an invisible agent, which is not implied in the latter. All that I intend to assert is, that the author's argument equally affects them both. Why does such interposal appear to him incredible? Not from any incongruity he discerns in the thing itself. He does not pretend it. But it is not conformable to his experience. 'A miracle,' says he, 'is a transgression of a law of nature *.' But how are the laws of nature known to us? By experience. What is the criterion whereby we must judge whether the laws of nature are transgressed? Solely the conformity or disconformity of events to our experience. This writer surely will not pretend, that we can have any knowledge *a priori*, either of the law, or of the violation.

Let us then examine, by his own principles, whether the King of Siam, of whom the story he alludes to, is related by Locke †, could have sufficient evidence from testimony, of a fact so contrary to his experience, as the freezing of water. He could just say as much of this event, as the author can say of a dead man's being restored to life. 'Such a thing was 'never observed, as far as I could learn, in any age or country.' If the things themselves too be impartially considered, and independently of the notions acquired by us in these northern

* Page 182, in the note.

† Essay on Human Understanding, book iv. chap. 15. § 5.

climates, we should account the first at least as extraordinary as the second.—That so pliant a body as water should become hard like pavement, so as to bear up an elephant on its surface, is as unlikely in itself, as that a body inanimate to-day, should be animated to-morrow. Nay, to the Indian monarch, I must think, that the first would appear more a miracle, more contrary to experience, than the second. If he had been acquainted with *ice* or frozen water, and afterwards seen it become fluid, but had never seen nor learned, that after it was melted, it became hard again, the relation must have appeared marvellous, as the process from fluidity to hardness never had been experienced, though the reverse often had. But I believe nobody will question, that on this supposition it would not have appeared quite so strange as it did. Yet this supposition makes the instance more parallel to the restoring of the dead to life. The process from animate to inanimate we are all acquainted with; and what is such a restoration, but the reversing of this process? So little reason had the author to insinuate, that the one was only *not conformable*, the other *contrary* to experience. If there be a difference in this respect, the first, to one alike unacquainted with both, must appear the more contrary of the two.

Does it alter the matter, that he calls the former 'a fact 'which arose from a state of nature, with which the Indian was 'unacquainted?' Was not such a state quite unconformable, or (which in the author's language I have shown to be the same) contrary to his experience? Is then a state of nature, which is contrary to experience, more credible than a single fact contrary to experience? I want the solution of one difficulty: The author, in order to satisfy me, presents me with a thousand others. Is this suitable to the method he proposes in another place, of admitting always the less miracle, and rejecting the greater *? Is it not, on the contrary, admitting without any difficulty the greater miracle, and thereby removing the difficulty, which he otherwise would have had in admitting the less? Does he forget, that to exhibit a state of nature entirely different from what we experience at present, is one of those enormous prodigies, which, in his account, render the Pentateuch unworthy of credit †? 'No Indian,' says he in the

* Page 182. † Page 206.

note, 'it is evident, could have experience that water did not 'freeze in cold climates. This is placing nature in a situation 'quite unknown to him, and it is impossible for him to tell, *a* '*priori*, what will result from it.' This is precisely, as if, in reply to the author's objection from experience against the raising of a dead man (suppose Lazarus) to life, I should retort: 'Neither you, Sir, nor any who live in this century, can have 'experience, that a dead man could not be restored to life at 'the command of one divinely commissioned to give a revela- 'tion to men. This is placing nature in a situation quite un- 'known to you, and it is impossible for you to tell, *a priori*, 'what will result from it. This therefore is not contrary to 'the course of nature, in cases where all the circumstances are 'the same. As you never saw one vested with such a commis- 'sion, you are as unexperienced, as ignorant of this point, as 'the inhabitants of Sumatra are of the frosts in Muscovy; you 'cannot therefore reasonably, any more than they, be positive 'as to the consequences *.' Should he rejoin, as doubtless he would, 'This is not taking away the difficulty; but, like the 'elephant and the tortoise, in the account given by some barba- 'rians of the manner in which the earth is supported, it only 'shifts the difficulty a step further back. My objection still 'recurs. That any man should be endowed with such power is 'contrary to experience, (or, as I have shown to be the same in 'this author's language, is not conformable to my experience) 'and therefore incredible:' Should he, I say, rejoin in this manner, I could only add, 'Pray, Sir, revise your own words 'lately quoted, and consider impartially whether they be not 'as glaringly exposed to the like reply.' For my part, I can only perceive one difference that is material between the two cases. You frankly confess, that with regard to the freezing of water, beside the absolute want of experience, there would be from analogy a presumption against it, which ought to weigh with a rational Indian. I think, on the contrary, in the case supposed by me, of one commissioned by Heaven, there is at least no presumption against the exertion of such a miraculous power. There is rather a presumption in its favour.

Does the author then say, that no testimony could give the

* See the latter part of the note on the following paragraph.

King of Siam sufficient evidence of the effects of cold on water? No. By implication he says the contrary: 'It required 'very strong testimony.' Will he say, that those most astonishing effects of electricity lately discovered, so entirely unanalogous to every thing before experienced, will he say, that such facts no reasonable man could have sufficient evidence from testimony to believe? No. We may presume he will not, from his decision in the former case; and if he should, the common sense of mankind would reclaim against such extravagance. Yet it is obvious to every considerate reader, that his argument concludes equally against those truly marvellous, as against miraculous events; both being alike unconformable, or alike contrary, to former experiences *.

* I cannot forbear to observe, that many of the principal terms, employed in the essay, are used in a manner extremely vague and unphilosophical. I have remarked the confusion I find in the application of the words *experience, contrariety, conformity.* I might remark the same thing of the word *miracle.* 'A 'miracle,' it is said, p. 182. *in the note,* 'may be accurately defined, *A* TRANSGRESSION *of the law of nature, by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposal of some invisible agent.* The word *transgression* invariably denotes a criminal opposition to authority. Rapine, adultery, murder, are transgressions of the laws of nature, but have nothing in common with miracles. The author's accuracy in representing God as a transgressor I have not indeed the perspicacity to discern. Does he intend, by throwing something monstrous into the definition, to infuse into the reader a prejudice against the thing defined? But supposing that, through inadvertency, he had used the term *transgression* instead of *suspension,* which would have been more intelligible and proper; one would at least expect, that the word *miracle,* in the essay, always expresses the sense of the definition. But this it evidently does not. Thus in the instance of the miracle supposed (p. 203. *in the note.*) he calls it, in the beginning of the paragraph, 'A violation of the usual course of nature;' but in the end, after telling us that such a miracle, on the evidence supposed, 'our present 'philosophers ought to receive for certain,' he subjoins, (how consistently, let the reader judge) 'and ought to search for the causes, whence it might be derived.' Thus it is insinuated, that though a fact apparently miraculous, and perfectly extraordinary, might be admitted by a philosopher, still the reality of the miracles must be denied. For if the interposal of the Deity be the proper solution of the phenomenon, Why should we recur to other causes? Hence a careless reader is insensibly led to think, that there is some special incredibility in such an interposal, distinct from its *uncommonness.* Yet the author's great argument is built on this single circumstance, and places such an interposition just on the same footing with every event that is equally uncommon. At one time, he uses the word *miracle* to denote a *bare improbability,* as will appear in the sixth section: At another, *absurd* and *miraculous* are, with him, synonymous terms; as

THUS I think I have shown, that the author is chargeable with some fallacies, in his way of managing the argument; that

are also the *miraculous nature* of an event, and its *absolute impossibility*. Is this the style and manner of a reasoner?

Let it, however, in further illustration of the question, be observed, that though, in one view, miracles may be said to imply a suspension of the laws of nature, by the interposition of an invisible agent, yet, in another and more extensive view, it may perhaps be affirmed, that, in strictness, nature's laws are never suspended. It will serve to remove the apparent inconsistency, to consider that, when we speak of the laws of nature, we commonly mean no more than those regarding the material world, or the laws of matter and motion with which we happen to be acquainted. Yet those which regard spiritual beings are as truly laws of nature as those which concern corporeal. Our acquaintance with the former, if we can call it acquaintance, is much more confined than with the latter; because the means of knowledge, in the one case are fewer, more subtle, and less accessible, than in the other. But we have reason from analogy to believe that every thing in the invisible, that is, in the moral and intellectual, as well as in the visible or material world, is regulated by permanent laws. In this view of the universal system, there is ground to think that the respective powers of the different orders of beings and their interpositions, and if so, divine illuminations themselves, are as really governed by general laws, as the events which result from physical causes, and take place in the material creation. In regard to these also, the term suspension is sometimes loosely used, where there is an interfering of powers, though it be acknowledged, on all sides, that, in the largest and most proper acceptation of the terms, there is no infringement of the laws of nature. Thus by the law of gravitation, a heavy body moves downwards, towards the centre of the earth, till it be stopped by some intervening object. By the law of magnetism, iron, one species of heavy bodies, may be attracted upwards, from the earth, and kept hanging in the air. In familiar discourse we might say that the law of gravity is suspended by the magnetical attraction; which means no more than that, in this instance, gravity proves a less powerful attraction than magnetism. In other instances, magnetism may be the weaker of the two. A loadstone, which will raise from the ground a piece of iron weighing an ounce, will produce no sensible effect upon one of a pound weight. But it is evident that, in a more enlarged view, the laws of nature undergo no suspension in either case, in as much as one, who is well acquainted with the attraction both of the magnet and of the earth, can, in any proposed experiment, tell for certain beforehand which will prevail. Thus, when we speak of miracles as suspensions of the laws of nature, the expression is admitted rather in apology for ignorance, than as what ought to be accounted philosophical or strictly proper. The intervention of superior agents, the comparative powers of these agents, and their operations may be, and probably are, regulated by the immutable laws of the universe, as much as whatever concerns the terraqueous globe, and the motions of the heavenly bodies. This will serve further to explain my retort upon Mr. Hume in the preceding paragraph, in relation to the freezing of water, which see.

he all along avails himself of ambiguity in the word *experience*; —that his reasoning includes a *petitio principii* in the bosom of it;—and that, in supporting his argument, he must have recourse to distinctions, where, even himself being judge, there is no difference.

SECTION III.

Mr. Hume himself gives up his favourite argument.

'MR. HUME himself,' methinks I hear my reader repeating with astonishment, 'gives up his favourite argument!' To prove this point is indeed a very bold attempt. Yet that this attempt is not altogether so arduous as, at first hearing, he will possibly imagine, I hope, if favoured a while with his attention, fully to convince him. If to acknowledge, after all, that there may be miracles, which admit of proof from human testimony; if to acknowledge, that such miracles ought to be received, not as probable only, but as absolutely certain; or, in other words, that the proof from human testimony may be such, as that all the contrary uniform experience, should not only be over-balanced, but, to use the author's expression, should be annihilated; if such acknowledgments as these are subversive of his own principles; if, by making them, he abandons his darling argument; this strange part the essayist evidently acts.

'I own,' these are his words, 'there may possibly be mira-'cles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind 'as to admit a proof from human testimony, though perhaps' (in this he is modest enough, he avers nothing; *perhaps*) 'it 'will be impossible to find any such in all the records of his-'tory.' To this declaration he subjoins the following supposition: 'Suppose all authors, in all languages, agree, that from 'the 1st January 1600, there was a total darkness over the 'whole earth for eight days; suppose that the tradition of this 'extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the peo-'ple; that all travellers, who return from foreign countries, 'bring us accounts of the same tradition, without the least va-

'riation or contradiction: It is evident, that our present philo-'sophers, instead of doubting of that fact, ought to receive it 'for certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might 'be derived *.'

Could one imagine, that the person who had made the above acknowledgment, a person too who is justly allowed, by all who are acquainted with his writings, to possess uncommon penetration and philosophical abilities, that this were the same individual, who had so short while before affirmed, that 'a miracle,' or a violation of the usual course of nature, 'supported by any 'human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of 'argument †;' who had insisted, that 'it is not requisite, in 'order to reject the fact, to be able accurately to disprove the 'testimony, and to trace its falsehood; that such an evidence 'carries falsehood on the very face of it ‡;' that 'we need but 'oppose, even to a cloud of witnesses, the absolute impossibility, 'or,' which is all one, 'miraculous nature of the events, which 'they relate; that this, in the eyes of all reasonable people, 'will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation §;' and who, finally to put an end to all altercation on the subject, had pronounced this *oracle*. 'NO TESTIMONY FOR ANY KIND OF 'MIRACLE CAN EVER POSSIBLY AMOUNT TO A PROBABILI-'TY, MUCH LESS TO A PROOF ||.' Was there ever a more glaring contradiction?

YET for the event supposed by the essayist, the testimony, in his judgment, would amount to a *probability*; nay, to more than a probability, to a *proof*; let not the reader be astonished, or if he cannot fail to be astonished, let him be incredulous, when I add, to *more than a proof*, more than a full, entire, and direct proof; for even this I hope to make evident from the author's principles and reasoning. 'And even 'supposing,' says he, that is, granting for argument's sake, 'that the testimony for a miracle amounted to a proof, it would 'be opposed by another proof, derived from the very nature of

* Page 203, in the note. † Page 194. ‡ Ib. § Page 196, &c.
|| Page 202. There is a small alteration made on this sentence in the edition of the Essay in 1767, which is posterior to the 2d edition of this Dissertation. See Preface, page 3.

'the fact, which it would endeavour to establish *.' Here is then by his own reasoning, proof against proof, from which there could result no belief or opinion, unless the one is conceived to be in some degree superior to the other. 'Of which proofs,' says he, 'the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminu-'tion of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist †.' Before the author could believe such a miracle as he supposes, he must at least be satisfied that the proof of it from testimony is stronger than the proof against it from experience. That we may form an accurate judgment of the strength he here ascribes to testimony, let us consider what, by his own account, is the strength of the opposite proof from experience. 'A 'miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and 'unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof 'against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as *entire* 'as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined ‡.' Again, 'As an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there 'is here a *direct* and *full* proof, from the nature of the fact, 'against the existence of any miracle §.' The proof then which the essayist admits from testimony, is, by his own estimate, not only superior to a *direct* and *full* proof, but even superior to as *entire* a proof as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Whence, I pray, doth testimony acquire such amazing evidence? 'Testimony,' says the author, 'hath no evi-'dence, but what it derives from experience. These differ 'from each other only as the species from the genus.' Put then for *testimony*, the word *experience*, which in this case is equivalent, and the conclusion will run thus: *Here is a proof from experience, which is superior to as entire a proof from experience, as can possibly be imagined.* This deduction from the author's words, the reader will perceive, is strictly logical. What the meaning of it is, I leave to Mr. Hume to explain.

What has been above deduced, how much soever it be accounted, is not all that is implied in the concession made by the author. He further says, that the miraculous fact, so attested, ought not only to be received, but to be received *for certain*. Is it not enough, Sir, that you have shown that your most full, most direct, most perfect argument may be overcome? Will

* Page 202. † Page 180. ‡ Page 180. § Page 181.

nothing satisfy you now but its destruction? One would imagine, that you had conjured up this demon, by whose irresistible arm you proposed to give a mortal blow to religion, and render scepticism triumphant, (that you had conjured him up, I say) for no other purpose, but to show with what facility you could lay him. To be serious, does not this author remember that he had oftener than once laid it down as a maxim, That when there is proof against proof, we must incline to the superior, still with a diminution of assurance, in proportion to the force of its antagonist *? But when a fact is received *for certain*, there can be no sensible diminution of assurance, such diminution always implying some doubt and *uncertainty*. Consequently the general proof from experience, though as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined, is not only surmounted, but is really in comparison as nothing, or, in Mr. Hume's phrase, undergoes annihilation, when balanced with the particular proof from testimony. Great indeed, it must be acknowledged, is the force of truth. This conclusion, on the principles I have been endeavouring to establish, has nothing in it, but what is conceivable and just; but on the principles of the essay, which deduce all the force of testimony from experience, serves only to confound the understanding, and to involve the subject in midnight darkness.

It is therefore manifest, that either this author's principles condemn his own method of judging, with regard to miraculous facts; or that his method of judging subverts his principles, and is a tacit desertion of them. Thus that impregnable fortress, the asylum of infidelity, which he so lately gloried in having erected, is in a moment abandoned by him, as a place untenable.

* Page 178, 180.

SECTION IV.

There is no peculiar presumption against such miracles as are said to have been wrought in support of religion.

Is it then so, that the decisive argument, the essayist flattered himself he had discovered *, which, with the wise and learned, was to prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and would consequently be useful, as long as the world endures; is it so, that this boasted argument has in fact little or no influence on the discoverer himself! But this author may well be excused. He cannot be always the metaphysician. He cannot soar incessantly in the clouds. Such constant elevation suits not the lot of humanity. He must sometimes, whether he will or not, descend to a level with other people, and fall into the humble track of common sense. One thing however he is resolved on: If he cannot by metaphysic spells silence the most arrogant bigotry and superstition; he will at any rate, though for this purpose he should borrow aid from what he hath no liking to, trite and popular topics; he will at any rate free himself from their impertinent solicitations.

There are accordingly two principles in human nature, by which he accounts for all the relations, that ever have been in the world, concerning miracles. These principles are, the *passion for the marvellous*, and the *religious affection* †; against either of which singly, the philosopher, he says, ought ever to be on his guard; but incomparably more so, when both happen to be in strict confederacy together. 'For if the spirit of 'religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of 'common sense; and human testimony in these circumstances 'loses all pretensions to authority ‡.' Notwithstanding this strong affirmation, there is reason to suspect that the author is not, in his heart, so great an enemy to the love of wonder, as he affects to appear. No man can make a greater concession in favour of the wonderful, than he hath done in the passage quoted in the preceding section. No man was ever fonder of

* Page 174. † Page 184, 185. ‡ Page 185.

paradox, and, in theoretical subjects, of every notion that is remote from sentiments universally received. This love of paradoxes, he owns himself, that both his enemies and his friends reproach him with *. There must surely be some foundation for so universal a censure. If therefore, in respect of the passion for the marvellous, he differ from other people, the difference arises from a particular delicacy in this gentleman, which makes him nauseate even to wonder with the crowd. He is of that singular turn that where every body is struck with astonishment, he can see nothing wonderous in the least; at the same time he discovers prodigies, where no soul but himself ever dreamed that there were any.

We may therefore rest assured of it, that the author might be conciliated to the *love of wonder*, provided the *spirit of religion* be kept at a distance, against which he hath unluckily contracted a mortal antipathy, against which he is resolved to wage eternal war. When he but touches this subject, he loses at once his philosophic equanimity, and speaks with an acrimony unusual to him on other occasions. Something of this kind appears from the citations already made. But if these should not satisfy, I shall produce one or two more, which certainly will. There is a second supposition the author makes, of a miraculous event, in a certain manner circumstanced and attested, which he declares, and I think with particular propriety, that he would 'not have the least *inclination* to believe †.' At his want of inclination the reader will not be surprised, when he learns, that this supposed miracle is concerning a *resurrection*; an event which bears too strong a resemblance both to the doctrine and to the miracles of holy writ, not to alarm a modern Pyrrhonist. To the above declaration he subjoins, 'But should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion, men in all ages have been so much imposed on by *ridiculous stories* of that kind, that this very circumstance would be a full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even *reject it without further examination*.' Again, a little after, 'As the violations of truth are more common in the testimony concerning religious miracles, than in that concerning any

* Dedication to the four Dissertations. † Page 204, in the note.

'other matter of fact,' (a point in which the author is positive, though he produces neither facts nor arguments to support it) 'this must diminish very much the authority of the 'former testimony, and' (pray observe his words), '*make us* '*form a* GENERAL RESOLUTION, *never to lend any atten-* '*tion to it, with whatever specious pretext it may be cover-* '*ed.*'

Never did the passion of an inflamed orator, or the intemperate zeal of a religionist, carry him further against his adversary, than this man of speculation is carried by his prejudice against religion. Demagogues and bigots have often warned the people against listening to the arguments of an envied and therefore detested rival, lest by his sophistry they should be seduced into the most fatal errors. The same part this author, a philosopher, a sceptic, a dispassionate inquirer after truth, as surely he chooses to be accounted, now acts in favour of infidelity. He thinks it not safe to give religion even a hearing. Nay so strange a turn have matters taken of late with the managers of this controversy, that it is now the FREE-THINKER who preaches *implicit faith*; it is the INFIDEL who warns us of the danger of consulting *reason*. Beware, says he, I admonish you, of inquiring into the strength of the plea, or of bringing it to the deceitful test of reason; for 'those who will 'be SO SILLY as to examine the affair by that medium, and 'seek particular flaws in the *testimony*, are almost sure to be 'confounded *.' That religion is concerned in the matter, is reckoned by these sages sufficient evidence of imposture. The proofs she offers in her own defence, we are told by these candid judges, ought to be rejected, and *rejected without examination*. The old way of scrutiny and argument must now be laid aside, having been at length discovered to be but a bungling, a tedious, and a dangerous way at best. What then shall we substitute in its place? The essayist has a most admirable expedient. A shorter and surer method he recommends to us, the expeditious way of *resolution*. 'Form,' says he, 'a 'GENERAL RESOLUTION, *never to lend any attention to testimo-* '*nies or facts urged by religion, with whatever specious pre-* '*text they may be covered.*'

* Page 197, in the note.

I had almost congratulated Mr. Hume, and our enlightened age, on this happy invention, before I reflected, that though the application might be new, the expedient itself, of resolving to be deaf to argument, was very ancient, having been often, with great success, employed against atheists and heretics, and warmly recommended by Bellarmine and Scotus, and most others of that bright fraternity the school-men: Persons, I acknowledge, to whom one could not, perhaps in any other instance, find a resemblance in my ingenious opponent.

I am afraid that, after such a declaration, I must not presume to consider myself as arguing with the author, who has, in so peremptory a manner, resolved to attend to nothing that can be said in opposition to his theory. 'What judgment he has,' to use his own expression, 'he has renounced by principle, in 'these sublime and mysterious subjects *.' If however it should prove the fate of these papers, the forbidding title of them notwithstanding, to be at any time honoured with the perusal of some infidel, not indeed so rivetted in unbelief as the essayist, I would earnestly entreat such reader, in the solemn style of Mr. Hume, 'To lay his hand upon his heart, 'and after serious consideration declare †,' If any of the patrons of religion had acted this part, and warned people not to try by *argument* the metaphysical subtleties of the adversaries, affirming, that 'they who were MAD enough to examine the affair by 'that medium, and seek particular flaws in the *reasoning*, were 'almost sure to be confounded; that the only prudent method 'was, to form a GENERAL RESOLUTION, never to lend any at-'tention to what was advanced on the opposite side, *however* '*specious*;' whether this conduct would not have afforded great matter of triumph to those gentlemen the deists; whether it would not have been construed by them, and even justly, into a tacit conviction of the weakness of our cause, which we were afraid of exposing in the light, and bringing to a fair trial. But we scorn to take shelter in obscurity, and meanly to decline the combat; confident as we are, that REASON is our *ally* and our *friend*, and glad to find that the enemy at length so violently suspects her.

As to the first method, by which the author accounts for

* Page 185. † Page 206.

the fabulous relations of monsters and prodigies, it is freely acknowledged, that the Creator has implanted in human nature, as a spur to the improvement of the understanding, a principle of *curiosity*, which makes the mind feel a particular pleasure in every new acquisition of knowledge. It is acknowledged also, that as every principle in our nature is liable to abuse, so this principle will often give the mind a bias to the marvellous, for the more marvellous any thing is, that is, the more unlike to all that has formerly been known, the more new it is; and this bias, in many instances, may induce belief on insufficient evidence.

But the presumption that arises hence against the marvellous is not stronger in the case of miracles (as will appear from an attentive perusal of the second section) than in the case of every fact that is perfectly extraordinary. Yet how easily this obstacle may be overcome by testimony, might be illustrated, if necessary, in almost every branch of science, in physiology, in geography, in history. On the contrary, what an immense impediment would this presumption prove to the progress of philosophy and letters, had it in reality one fiftieth part of the strength, which the author seems to attribute to it. I shall not tire my reader or myself by recurring to the philosophic wonders in electricity, chemistry, magnetism, which, all the world sees, may be fully proved to us by testimony, before we make the experiments ourselves.

But there is, it seems, additional to this, a peculiar presumption against religious miracles. 'The wise,' as the author has observed with reason, 'lend a very academic faith to every re-'port, which favours the passion of the reporter, whether it 'magnifies his country, his family, or himself, or in any other 'way strikes in with his natural inclinations and propensities *.' Now, as no object whatever operates more powerfully on the fancy than *religion* does, or works up the passion to a higher fervour; so, in matters relating to this subject, if in any subject, we have reason to suspect that the understanding will prove a dupe to the passions. On this point therefore we ought to be peculiarly cautious, that we be not hasty of belief. In this sentiment we all agree.

* Page 200.

But there is one circumstance which he has overlooked, and which is nevertheless of the greatest consequence in the debate. It is this, that the prejudice resulting from the religious affection, may just as readily *obstruct*, as *promote* our faith in a religious miracle. What things in nature are more contrary, than one religion is to another religion? They are just as contrary as light and darkness, truth and error. The affections, with which they are contemplated by the same person, are just as opposite as desire and aversion, love and hatred. The same religious zeal which gives the mind of a Christian a *propensity* to the belief of a miracle in support of Christianity, will inspire him with an *aversion* from the belief of a miracle in support of Mahometanism. The same principle which will make him acquiesce in evidence *less* than sufficient in one case, will make him require evidence *more* than sufficient in the other.

Before then the remark of the author can be of any use in directing our judgment, as to the evidence of miracles attested, we must consider whether the original tenets of the witnesses would naturally have biassed their minds in *favour* of the miracles, or in *opposition* to them. If the former was the case, the testimony is so much the *less* to be regarded; if the latter, so much the *more*. Will it satisfy on this head to acquaint us, that the prejudices of the witnesses must have favoured the miracles, since they were zealous promoters of the doctrine, in support of which those miracles are said to have been performed? To answer thus would be to misunderstand the point. The question is, Was this doctrine the faith of the witnesses, before they saw, or fancied they saw, the miracles? If it was, I agree with him. Great, very great allowance must be made for the prejudices of education, for principles, early perhaps, carefully and deeply rooted in their minds, and for the religious affection founded in these principles; which allowance must always derogate from the weight of their testimony. But if the faith of the witnesses stood originally in opposition to the doctrine attested by the miracles; if the only account that can be given of their conversion, is the conviction which the miracles produced in them; it must be a preposterous way of arguing, to derive their conviction from a religious zeal, which would at first obstinately withstand, and for some time hinder such con-

viction. On the contrary, that the evidence arising from miracles performed in proof of a doctrine disbelieved, and consequently hated before, did in fact surmount that obstacle, and conquer all the opposition arising thence, is a very strong presumption in favour of that evidence; just as strong a presumption in its favour, as it would have been against it, had all their former zeal, and principles, and prejudices, co-operated with the evidence, whatever it was, in gaining an entire assent.

Hence there is the greatest disparity in this respect, a disparity which deserves to be particularly attended to, betwixt the evidence of miracles performed in proof of a religion *to be* established, and in *contradiction* to opinions generally received; and the evidence of miracles performed in support of a religion *already* established, and in *confirmation* of opinions generally received. Hence also the greatest disparity betwixt the miracles recorded by the evangelists, and those related by Mariana, Bede, or any Monkish historian.

THERE is then no peculiar presumption against religious miracles merely as such; if in certain circumstances there is a presumption against them, the presumption arises solely from the circumstances, insomuch that, in the opposite circumstances, it is as strongly in their favour.

SECTION V.

There is a peculiar presumption in favour of such miracles as are said to have been wrought in support of religion.

IN this section I propose to consider the reverse of the question treated in the former. In the former I proved that there is no peculiar presumption against religious miracles; I now inquire whether there be any in their favour. The question is important, and intimately connected with the subject.

THE boldest infidel will not deny, that the immortality of the soul, a future and eternal state, and the connection of our

happiness or misery in that state, with our present good or bad conduct, not to mention the doctrines concerning the divine unity and perfections, are tenets which carry no absurdity in them. They may be true for aught he knows. He disbelieves them, not because they are incredible in themselves, but because he has not evidence of their truth. He pretends not to disprove them, nor does he think the task incumbent on him. He only pleads that, before he can yield them his assent, they must be proved.

Now, as whatever is possible, may be supposed, let us suppose that the doctrines above mentioned are all infallible truths; and let the unbeliever say, whether he can conceive an object worthier of the divine interposal, than to reveal these truths to mankind; and to enforce them in such a manner as may give them a suitable influence on the heart and life. Of all the inhabitants of the earth, man is incomparably the noblest. Whatever therefore regards the interest of the human species, is a grander concern, than what regards either the inanimate or brute creation. If man was made, as is doubtless not impossible, for an after state of immortality; whatever relates to that immortal state, or may conduce to prepare him for the fruition of it, must be immensely superior to that which concerns merely the transient enjoyments of the present life. How sublime then is the object which religion, and religion only, exhibits as the ground of supernatural interpositions! This object is no other than the interest of man, a reasonable and moral agent, the only being in this lower world which bears in his soul the image of his Maker; not the interest of an individual, but of the kind; not for a limited duration, but for eternity; an object at least in one respect adequate to the majesty of God.

Does this appear to the essayist too much like arguing *a priori*, which I know he detests? It is just such an argument as, presupposing the most rational principles of Deism, results from those maxims concerning intelligent causes, and their operations, which are founded in general experience, and which uniformly lead us to expect, that the end will be proportionate to the means. The *Pagans* of Rome had notions of their divinities infinitely inferior to the opinions concerning God, which in Christian countries are maintained even by those,

who, for distinction's sake, are called DEISTS. Yet such of the former as had any justness of taste, were offended with those poets who exhibited the celestials on slight occasions, and for trivial purposes, interfering in the affairs of men. Why? Because such an exhibition shocked all the principles of probability. It had not that versimilitude which is absolutely necessary to render fiction agreeable. Accordingly it is a precept, with relation to the machinery of the drama, given by one who was both a critic and a poet, *That a god must never be introduced, unless to accomplish some important design, which could not be otherwise effected* *. The foundation of this rule, which is that of my argument, is therefore one of those indisputable principles which are found every where among the earliest results of experience.

THUS it appears, that from the dignity of the end, there arises a peculiar presumption in favour of such miracles as are said to have been wrought in support of religion.

SECTION VI.

Inquiry into the meaning and propriety of one of Mr. Hume's favourite maxims.

THERE is a method truly curious, suggested by the author, for extricating the mind, should the evidence from testimony be so great, that its falsehood might, as he terms it, be accounted miraculous. In this puzzling case, when a man is so beset with miracles, that he is under the necessity of admitting one, he must always take care it be the smallest; for it is an *axiom* in this writer's DIALECTIC, That *the probability of the fact is in the inverse ratio of the quantity of miracle there is in it.* 'I 'weigh,' says he, 'the one miracle against the other, and ac-'cording to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my 'decision, and always reject the greater miracle †.'

* Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus Inciderit.
HORAT.

† Page 182.

Now, of this method, which will no doubt be thought by many to be very ingenious, and which appears to the essayist both very momentous and very perspicuous, I own, I am not able to discover either the reasonableness or the use.

First, I cannot see the reasonableness. 'A miracle,' to adopt his own definition, 'implies the transgression,' or rather the suspension, 'of some law of nature; and that either by a 'particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposal of some 'invisible agent *.' Now, as I should think, from the principles laid down in the preceding section, that it would be for no trifling purpose, that the laws of nature would be suspended, and either the Deity or an invisible agent would interpose; it is on the same principles, natural to imagine, that the means, or miracle performed, should bear a proportion, in respect of dignity and greatness, to the end proposed. Were I therefore under such a necessity as is supposed by Mr. Hume, of admitting the truth of a miracle, I acknowledge, that of two contradictory miracles, where all other circumstances are equal, I should think it reasonable to believe the greater. I shall borrow an illustration from the author himself.—'A miracle,' he says, 'may either be *discoverable* by men or not. This 'alters not its nature and essence. The raising of a house or 'ship into the air is a visible miracle; the raising of a feather, 'when the wind wants *ever so little* of a force requisite for that 'purpose, is as real a miracle, though not so *sensible* with re-'gard to us †.' Surely if any miracle may be called *little*, the last mentioned is intitled to that denomination, not only because it is an *undiscoverable* and *insensible* miracle, but because the quantum of miraculous force requisite is, by the hypothesis, *ever so little*, or the least conceivable. Yet if it were certain, that God, angel, or spirit, were, for one of those purposes, to interpose in suspending the laws of nature; I believe most men would join with me in thinking, that it would be rather for the raising of a *house* or *ship*, than for the raising of a *feather*.

But though the maxim laid down by the author were just, I cannot discover in what instance, or by what application, it can be rendered of any utility. Why? Because we have no rule,

* Page 182, in the note. † Ib. in the note.

whereby we can judge of the greatness of miracles. I allow that, in such a singular instance as that above quoted from the essay, we may judge safely enough. But that can be of no practical use. In almost every case that will occur, I may warrantably aver, that it will be impossible for the acutest intellect to decide, which of the two is the greatest miracle. As to the author, I cannot find that he has favoured us with any light, in so important and so critical a question. Have we not then some reason to dread, that the task will not be less difficult to furnish us with a *measure*, by which we can determine the magnitude of miracles; than to provide us with a *balance*, by which we can ascertain the comparative weight of testimonies and experiences?

If, leaving the speculations of the essayist, we shall, in order to be assisted on this subject, recur to his example and decisions; let us consider the miracle which was recited in the third section, and which he declares, would, on the evidence of such testimony as he supposes, not only be probable, but certain. For my part, it is not in my power to conceive a greater miracle than that is. The whole universe is affected by it; the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars. The most invariable laws of nature with which we are acquainted, even those which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, and dispense darkness and light to worlds, are violated. I appeal to the author himself, whether it could be called a greater, or even so great a miracle, that all the writers at that time, or even all mankind, had been seized with a new species of epidemical delirium, which had given rise to this strange illusion. But in this the author is remarkably unfortunate, that the principles by which he in fact regulates his judgment and belief, are often the reverse of those which he endeavours to establish in his theory.

SHALL I hazard a conjecture? It is, that the word *miracle*, as thus used by the author, is used in a vague and improper sense, as a synonymous term for *improbable*; and that believing the *less*, and rejecting the *greater miracle*, denote simply believing what is *least*, and rejecting what is *most improbable*; or still more explicitly, believing what we think *most worthy of belief*, and rejecting what we think *least worthy*. I am aware, on a second perusal of the author's words, that my talent in guessing

may be justly questioned. He has in effect told us himself what he means. 'When any one,' says he, 'tells me that he 'saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with 'myself, whether it be more *probable*, that this person should 'either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact he relates, 'should really have happened. I weigh the one *miracle* 'against the other; and according to the superiority which I 'discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the great-'er miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more 'miraculous than the event which he relates; then, and not till 'then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion *.' At first indeed one is ready to exclaim, What a strange *revolution* is here! The belief of miracles then, even by Mr. Hume's account is, absolutely inevitable. Miracles themselves too, so far from being impossible, or even extraordinary, are the commonest things in nature; so common, that when any miraculous fact is attested to us, we are equally under a necessity of believing a miracle, whether we believe the fact or deny it. The whole difference between the essayist and us, is at length reduced to this single point, Whether greater or smaller miracles are entitled to the preference? This mystery however vanishes on a nearer inspection. The style, we find, is figurative, and the author is all the while amusing both his readers and himself with an unusual application of a familiar term. What is called the weighing of *probabilities* in one sentence, is the weighing of *miracles* in the next. If it were asked, for what reason did not Mr. Hume express his sentiment in ordinary and proper words? I could only answer, I know no reason but one, and that is, To give the appearance of novelty and depth to one of those very harmless propositions, which by philosophers are called *identical*, and which, to say the truth, need some disguise to make them pass upon the world with tolerable decency.

What then shall be said of the conclusion which he gives as the sum and quintessence of the first part of the essay? The best thing, for aught I know, that can be said, is, that it contains a most certain truth, though at the same time the least significant, that ever perhaps was ushered into the world with so much solemnity. In order therefore to make *plainer Eng-*

* Page 182.

lish of his *plain consequence*, let us only change the word *miraculous*, as applied to the falsehood of human testimony, into *improbable*, which in this passage is entirely equivalent, and observe the effect produced by this elucidation. 'The plain consequence is, and it is a GENERAL MAXIM, *worthy of our attention*, That NO TESTIMONY IS SUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH A MIRACLE; UNLESS THE TESTIMONY BE OF SUCH A KIND, THAT ITS FALSEHOOD WOULD BE MORE IMPROBABLE, THAN THE FACT WHICH IT ENDEAVOURS TO ESTABLISH *.' If the reader think himself instructed by this discovery, I should be loth to envy him the pleasure he may derive from it.

* Page 182.

A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

PART II.

THE MIRACLES ON WHICH THE BELIEF OF CHRISTIANITY IS FOUNDED, ARE SUFFICIENTLY ATTESTED.

SECTION I.

There is no presumption, arising from human nature, against the miracles said to have been wrought in proof of Christianity.

FROM what has been evinced in the fourth and fifth sections of the former part, with regard to religion in general, *two corollaries* are clearly deducible in favour of Christianity. *One* is, That the presumption arising from the dignity of the end, to say the least of it, can in no religion be pleaded with greater advantage, than in the Christian. *The other* is, That the presumption arising from the religious affection, instead of weakening, corroborates the evidence of the gospel. The faith of Jesus was promulgated, and gained ground, not with the assistance, but in defiance, of all the religious zeal and prejudices of the times.

IN order to invalidate the *second* corollary, it will possibly be urged, that proselytes to a new religion, may be gained at first; either by address and eloquence, or by the appearances of uncommon sanctity, and rapturous fervours of devotion; that if once people have commenced proselytes, the transition to enthusiasm is almost unavoidable; and that enthusiasm will fully account for the utmost pitch both of credulity and falseness.

Admitting that a few converts might be made by the aforesaid arts, it is subversive of all the laws of probability, to imagine, that the strongest prepossessions, fortified with that vehement abhorrence which contradiction in religious principles rarely fails to excite, should be so easily vanquished in multitudes. Besides, the very pretext of supporting the doctrine by miracles, if a false pretext, would of necessity do unspeakable hurt to the cause. The pretence of miracles will quickly attract the attention of all to whom the new doctrine is published. The influence which address and eloquence, appearances of sanctity and fervours of devotion, would otherwise have had, however great, will be superseded by the consideration of what is infinitely more striking and decisive. The miracles will therefore first be canvassed, and canvassed with a temper of mind the most unfavourable to conviction. It is not solely on the testimony of the evangelists that Christians believe the gospel, though that testimony appears in all respects such as merits the highest regard; but it is on the success of the gospel; it is on the testimony, as we may justly call it, of the numberless proselytes that were daily made to a religion, opposing all the religious professions then in the world, and appealing, for the satisfaction of every body, to the visible and miraculous interposition of Heaven in its favour. The witnesses considered in this light, and in this light they ought to be considered, will be found more than 'a sufficient number:' And though perhaps there were few of them, what the author would denominate 'men of education and learning;' yet, which is more essential, they were generally men of good sense, and knowledge enough to secure them against all delusion, as to those plain facts for which they gave their testimony; men who (in the common acceptation of the words) neither did, nor could derive to themselves either interest or honour by their attestations, but did thereby, on the contrary, evidently abandon all hopes of both.

It deserves also to be remembered, that there is here no contradictory testimony, notwithstanding that both the founder of our religion and his adherents were from the first surrounded by inveterate enemies, who never 'esteemed the matter too in-'considerable to deserve their attention or regard;' and who, as they could not want the means, gave evident proofs that they

wanted not the inclination to detect the fraud, if there had been any fraud to be detected. They were jealous of their own reputation and authority, and foresaw but too clearly, that the success of Jesus would give a fatal blow to both. As to the testimonies themselves, we may permit the author to try them by his own rules *. There is here no opposition of testimony; there is no apparent ground of suspicion from the character of the witnesses; there is no interest which they could have in imposing on the world; there is not a small number of witnesses; they are innumerable. Do the historians of our Lord deliver their testimony with doubt and hesitation? Do they fall into the opposite extreme of using too violent asseverations? So far from both, that the most amazing instances of divine power, and the most interesting events, are related without any censure or reflection of the writers on persons, parties, actions, or opinions; with such an unparalleled and unaffected simplicity, as demonstrates, that they were neither themselves animated by passion like enthusiasts, nor had any design of working on the passions of their readers. The greatest miracles are recorded with as little appearance either of doubt or wonder in the writer, and with as little suspicion of the reader's incredibility, as the most ordinary incidents: A manner as unlike that of imposters as of enthusiasts; a manner in which those writers are altogether singular; and I will add, a manner which can on no supposition be tolerably accounted for, but that of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety, of the events which they related. They spoke like people who had themselves been long familiarized to such acts of omnipotence and grace. They spoke like people who knew that many of the most marvellous actions they related had been so publicly performed, and in the presence of multitudes alive at the time of their writing, as to be incontrovertible, and as in fact not to have been controverted, even by their bitterest foes. They could boldly appeal on this head to their enemies. *A man*, say they, speaking of their master †, *approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as* YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW. The objections of Christ's persecutors against his doctrine, those ob-

* Page 178. † Acts ii. 22.

jections also which regard the nature of his miracles, are, together with his answers, faithfully recorded by the sacred historians; it is strange, if the occasion had been given, that we have not the remotest hint of any objections against the reality of his miracles, and a confutation of those objections.

But passing the manner in which the first proselytes may be gained to a new religion, and supposing some actually gained, no matter how, to the faith of Jesus; can it be easily accounted for, that, even with the help of those early converts, this religion should have been propagated in the world, on the *false* pretence of miracles? Nothing more easily, says the author. Those original propagators of the gospel have been deceived themselves; for 'a religionist may be an *enthusiast*, and imagine he sees what has no reality *.'

Were this admitted, it would not, in the present case, remove the difficulty. He must not only himself imagine he sees what has no reality, he must make every body present, those who are no enthusiasts, nor even friends, nay, he must make enemies also, imagine they see the same thing which he imagines he sees; for the miracles of Jesus were acknowledged by those who persecuted him.

That an *enthusiast* is very liable to be imposed on, in whatever favours the particular species of enthusiasm with which he is affected, none, who knows any thing of the human heart, will deny. But still this frailty has its limits. For my own part, I cannot find examples of any, even among enthusiasts, (unless to the conviction of every body they were distracted) who did not see and hear in the same manner as other people. Many of this tribe have mistaken the reveries of a heated imagination, for the communications of the Divine Spirit, who never, in one single instance, mistook the operations of their external senses. —Without marking this difference, we should make no distinction between the *enthusiastic* character and the *frantic*, which are in themselves evidently distinct. How shall we then account from *enthusiasm*, for the testimony given by the apostles, concerning the resurrection of their master, and his ascension into heaven, not to mention innumerable other facts? In

* Page 185.

these it was impossible that any, who in the use of their reason were but one remove from *Bedlamites*, should have been deceived. Yet, in the present case the unbeliever must even say more than this; and, accumulating absurdity upon absurdity, must affirm, that the apostles were deceived as to the resurrection and ascension of their master, notwithstanding that they themselves had concerted the plan of stealing his body, and concealing it.

But this is not the only resource of the infidel. If he is driven from this strong hold, he can take refuge in another. Admit the apostles were not deceived themselves, they may nevertheless have been, through mere devotion and benevolence, incited to deceive the rest of mankind. The religionist, rejoins the author, 'may know his narration to be false, and 'yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for 'the sake of promoting so holy a cause *.'

Our religion, to use its own nervous language, teaches us †, that we ought not to lie, or *speak wickedly* not even *for God*; that we ought not to *accept his person* in judgment, or *talk*, or act *deceitfully for him*. But so very little, it must be owned, has this sentiment been attended to, even in the Christian world, that one would almost think it contained a strain of virtue too sublime for the apprehension of the multitude. It is therefore a fact not to be questioned, that little pious frauds, as they are absurdly, not to say impiously called, have been often practised by ignorant zealots, in support of a cause which they firmly believed to be both true and holy. But in all such cases the truth and holiness of the cause are wholly independent of those artifices. A person may be persuaded of the former, who is too clear-sighted to be deceived by the latter: for even a full conviction of the truth of the cause is not, in the least, inconsistent with either the consciousness, or the detection of the frauds used in support of it. In the Romish church, for example, there are many zealous and orthodox believers, who are nevertheless incapable of being imposed on by the lying wonders, which some of their clergy have exhibited. The circumstances of the apostles were widely different from the circum-

* Page 185. † Job xiii. 7, 8.

stances either of those believers, or of their clergy. Some of the miraculous events, which the apostles attested, were not only the *evidences*, but the distinguishing *doctrines* of the religion which they taught. There is therefore in their case an absolute inconsistency betwixt a conviction of the truth of the cause, and the consciousness of the frauds used in support of it. Those frauds themselves, if I may so express myself, constituted the very essence of the cause. What were the tenets, by which they were distinguished, in their religious system, particularly from the Pharisees, who owned not only the unity and perfections of the Godhead, the existence of angels and demons, but the general resurrection, and a future state of rewards and punishments? Were not these their peculiar tenets, 'That Jesus, whom the Jews and Romans joined in crucifying without the gates of Jerusalem, had suffered 'that ignominious death, to make atonement for the sons of 'men*? that, in testimony of this, and of the divine acceptance, God had raised him from the dead? that he had exalted him to his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, 'to give repentance to the people, and the remission of their 'sins†? that he is now our advocate with the Father‡? that 'he will descend from heaven at the last day, to judge the 'world in righteousness §, and to receive his faithful disciples 'into heaven, to be for ever with himself ‖?' These fundamental articles of their system, they must have known, deserved no better appellation than a string of lies, if we suppose them liars in the testimony they gave of the resurrection and ascension of their master. If, agreeably to the Jewish hypothesis, they had, in a most wonderful and daring manner, stole by night the corpse from the sepulchre, that, on the false report of his resurrection, they might found the stupendous fabric they had projected among themselves, how was it possible they should conceive the cause to be either true or holy? They must have known, that in those cardinal points, on which all depends, they were false witnesses concerning God, wilful corrupters of the religion of their country, and public, though indeed disinterested incendiaries, whithersoever they

* Rom. v. 6, &c. † Acts ii. 32, &c. v. 30, &c. x. 40, &c.
‡ 1 John ii. 1. § Acts x. 42. xvii. 31. ‖ John xiv. 3,

went. They could not therefore enjoy even that poor solace, 'that the end will sanctify the means;' a solace with which the monk or anchoret silences the remonstrances of his conscience, when, in defence of a religion which he regards as certain, he, by some pitiful juggler-trick, imposes on the credulity of the rabble. On the contrary, the whole scheme of the apostles must have been, and not only must have been, but must have appeared to themselves, a most audacious freedom with their Maker, a villainous imposition on the world, and, I will add, a most foolish and ridiculous project of heaping ruin and disgrace upon themselves, without the prospect of any compensation in the present life, or reversion in the future.

ONCE more, can we account for so extraordinary a phenomenon, by attributing it to that most powerful of all motives, as the author thinks it *, 'an ambition to attain so sublime a 'character, as that of a missionary, a prophet, an ambassador 'from heaven?'

Not to mention, that such a towering ambition, was but ill adapted to the mean rank, poor education, and habitual circumstances, of such men as the apostles mostly had been; a desire of that kind, whatever wonders it may effectuate, when supported by enthusiasm, and faith, and zeal, must have soon been crushed by the outward, and to human appearance insurmountable difficulties and distresses they had to encounter; when quite unsupported from within by either faith, or hope, or the testimony of a good conscience; rather I should have said, when they themselves were haunted from within by a consciousness of the blackest guilt, impiety, and baseness. Strange indeed, it must be owned without a parallel, that in such a cause, and in such circumstances, not only one, but all, should have the resolution to persevere to the last, in spite of infamy and torture; and that no one, among so many confederates, should be induced to betray the dreadful secret.

THUS it appears, that no *address* in the FOUNDER of our religion, that no *enthusiastic credulity*, no *pious frauds*, no *ambitious views*, in the FIRST CONVERTS, will account for its

* Page 200.

propagation on the plea of miracles, if false; and that consequently there is no presumption arising from *human nature* against the miracles said to have been wrought in proof of Christianity.

SECTION II.

There is no presumption arising from the history of mankind, against the miracles said to have been wrought in proof of Christianity.

In the foregoing section, I reasoned only from the knowledge that experience affords us of *human nature*, and of the motives by which men are influenced in their conduct. I come now to the examination of facts, that I may know whether the *history of mankind* will invalidate or corroborate my reasonings.

The essayist is confident, that all the evidence resulting hence is on his side. Nay so unquestionable a truth does this appear to him, that he never attempts to prove it: He always presupposes it, as a point universally acknowledged. 'Men in 'all ages,' we learn from a passage already quoted, 'have been 'much imposed on, by ridiculous stories of miracles ascribed to 'new systems of religion *.' Again he asserts, that 'the viola- 'tions of truth are more common in the testimony concerning 'religious miracles, than in that concerning any other matter of 'fact †.' These assertions, however, though used for the same purpose, the attentive reader will observe, are far from conveying the same sense, or being of equal weight in the argument. The difference has been marked in the fourth section of the first part of this tract. The oracular predictions among the ancient Pagans, and the pretended wonders performed by capuchins and friars, by itinerant or stationary teachers among the Roman Catholics, the author will doubtless reckon among religious miracles; but he can with no propriety denominate

* Page 204, in the note. † Page 205, in the note.

them miracles ascribed to a new system of religion *. Now it is with those of the class last mentioned, and with those only, that I am concerned; for it is only to them that the miracles wrought in proof of Christianity bear any analogy.

I shall then examine impartially this bold assertion, That 'men in all ages have been imposed on by ridiculous stories of 'miracles ascribed to new systems of religion.' For my part, I am fully satisfied, that there is not the shadow of truth in it: and I am utterly at a loss to conceive what could induce an author, so well versed in the annals both of ancient and modern times as Mr. Hume, in such a positive manner to advance it. I believe it will require no elaborate disquisition to evince, that these two, JUDAISM and CHRISTIANITY, are of all that have subsisted, or now subsist in the world, the only religions which claim to have been attended in their first publication with the evidence of *miracles*. It deserves also to be remarked, that it is more in conformity to common language, and incidental distinctions which have arisen, than to strict propriety, that I call Judaism and Christianity two religions. It is true, the Jewish creed, in the days of our Saviour, having been corrupted by rabbinical traditions, stood in many respects, and at this day stands, in direct opposition to the gospel. But it is not in this acceptation that I use the word Judaism. Such a creed, I am

* Should the author insist, that such miracles are nevertheless meant to establish, if not a new system, at least some *new point* of religion; that those which are wrought in Spain, for example, are not intended as proofs of the gospel, but as proofs of the efficacy of a particular *crucifix* or *relic*; which is always a new point, or at least not universally received: I must beg the reader will consider, what is the meaning of this expression, *a new point of religion*. It is not *a new system*, it is not even *a new doctrine*. We know, that one article of faith in the church of Rome is, that the images and relics of saints ought to be worshipped. We know also, that, in proof of this article, it is one of their principal arguments, that miracles are wrought by means of such relics and images. We know further, that the church never attempted to enumerate her relics and other trumpery, and thus to ascertain the individual objects of the adoration of her votaries. The producing therefore a *new relic*, *image*, or *crucifix*, as an object of worship implies not the smallest *deviation* from the *faith established*; at the same time the opinion, that *miracles* are performed by means of such relic, image, or crucifix, proves in the minds of the people, for the reason assigned, a very strong *confirmation* of the *faith established*. All such miracles therefore must be considered, as wrought in support of the received superstition, and accordingly are always favoured by the popular prejudices. See Preface.

sensible, we can no more denominate the doctrine of the *Old Testament*, than we can denominate the creed of Pope Pius the doctrine of the *New*. And truly the fate which both institutions, that of *Moses*, and that of *Christ*, have met with among men, has been in many respects extremely similar. But when, on the contrary, we consider the religion of the Jews, not as the system of faith and practice, which obtains at present, or has obtained heretofore, among that people; but solely as the religion that is revealed in *the law and the prophets*, we must acknowledge, that in this institution are contained the rudiments of the gospel. The same great plan carried on by the divine providence, for the recovery and final happiness of mankind, is the subject of both dispensations. They are by consequence closely connected. In the former we are acquainted with the *occasion* and *rise*, in the latter more fully with the *progress* and *completion* of this benign scheme. It is for this reason that the scriptures of the *Old Testament*, which alone contain the authentic religion of the SYNAGOGUE, have ever been acknowledged in the CHURCH, an essential part of the *gospel-revelation*. The apostles and evangelists, in every part of their writings, presuppose the truth of the Mosaic economy, and often found both their doctrine and arguments upon it. It is therefore, I affirm, only in proof of this one series of revelations, that the aid of miracles has with success been pretended to.

CAN the PAGAN religion, can, I should rather say, any of the numberless religions (for they are totally distinct) known by the common name of *Pagan*, produce any claim of this kind that will merit our attention? If the author know of any, I wish he had mentioned it; for in all antiquity, as far as my acquaintance with it reaches, I can recollect no such claim. However, that I may not, on the one hand, appear to pass the matter too slightly; or, on the other, lose myself, as Mr. Hume expresses it, in too wide a field; I shall briefly consider, whether the ancient religions of *Greece* or *Rome* (which of all the species of Heathenish superstition are on many accounts the most remarkable) can present a claim of this nature. Will it be said, that that monstrous heap of fables we find in ancient bards, relating

to the genealogy, production, amours, and achievements of the gods, are the miracles on which Greek and Roman Paganism claims to be founded?

If one should talk in this manner, I must remind him, *first*, that these are by no means exhibited as EVIDENCES, but as the THEOLOGY itself; the poets always using the same affirmative style concerning what passed in heaven, in hell, and in the ocean, where men could not be spectators, as concerning what passed upon the earth; *secondly*, that all those mythological tales are confessedly recorded many centuries after they are supposed to have happened; no voucher, no testimony, nothing that can deserve the name of evidence having been produced, or even alleged, in proof of them; *thirdly*, that the intention of the writers seems to be solely the amusement, not the conviction of their readers; that accordingly no writer scruples to model the mythology to his particular taste, or rather caprice; but considering this as a province subject to the laws of Parnassus, all agree in arrogating here the immemorial privilege of poets, to say and feign, unquestioned, what they please; and, *fourthly*, that at least several of their narrations are allegorical, and as plainly intended to convey some physical or moral instruction, as any of the apologues of Æsop. But to have said even thus much in refutation of so absurd a plea, will perhaps to many readers appear superfluous.

LEAVING therefore the endless absurdities and incoherent fictions of idolaters, I shall inquire, in the next place, whether the MAHOMETAN worship (which in its speculative principles appears more rational) pretends to have been built on the evidence of miracles.

Mahomet, the founder of this profession, openly and frequently, as all the world knows, disclaimed such evidences. He frankly owned, that he had no commission nor power to work miracles, being sent of God to the people only as a preacher. Not indeed but that there are things mentioned in the revelation he pretended to give them, which, if true, would have been miraculous; such are the nocturnal visits of the angel Gabriel, (not unlike those secret interviews, which Numa, the instituter of the Roman rites, affirmed that he had with the goddess

Egeria) his getting from time to time parcels of the uncreated book transmitted to him from heaven, and his most amazing night-journey. But these miracles could be no evidences of his mission. Why? because no person was witness to them. —On the contrary, it was because his adherents had previously and implicitly believed his apostleship, that they admitted things so incredible, on his bare declaration. There is indeed one miracle, and but one, which he often urges against the infidels, as the main support of his cause; a miracle, for which even we, in this distant region and period, have not only the evidence of testimony, but, if we please to use it, all the evidence which the contemporaries and countrymen of this military apostle ever enjoyed. The miracle I mean is the manifest divinity, or supernatural excellence, of the scriptures which he gave them; a miracle, concerning which I shall only say, that as it falls not under the cognizance of the senses, but of a much more fallible tribunal, taste in composition, and critical discernment, so a principle of less efficacy than enthusiasm, even the slightest partiality, may make a man, in this particular, imagine he perceives what has no reality. Certain it is, that notwithstanding the many defiances, which the prophet gave his enemies, sometimes to produce ten chapters, sometimes one, that could bear to be compared with an equal portion of the perspicuous book *, they seem not in the least to have been convinced, that there was any thing miraculous in the matter. Nay this sublime performance, so highly venerated by every Mussulman, they were not afraid to blaspheme as contemptible, calling it, 'A confused 'heap of dreams,' and 'the silly fables of ancient times †.'

* Alcoran. The chapter—of the cow—of Jonas, of Hud.

† —Of cattle—of the spoils—of the Prophets. That the Alcoran bears a very strong resemblance to the Talmud is indeed evident; but I hardly think we can have a more striking instance of the prejudices of modern infidels, than in their comparing this motley composition to the writings of the Old and New Testament. Let the reader but take the trouble to peruse the history of Joseph by Mahomet, which is the subject of a very long chapter, and to compare it with the account of that patriarch given by Moses, and if he do not perceive at once the immense inferiority of the former, I shall never, for my part, undertake by argument to convince him of it. To me it appears even almost incredible, that the most beautiful and most affecting passages of holy writ, should have been so wretchedly disfigured by a writer whose intention, we are certain, was not

Passing therefore this equivocal miracle, if I may call it so, which I imagine was of very little use in *making* proselytes, whatever use it might have had, in *confirming* and *tutoring* those already made; it may be worth while to inquire, what

to burlesque them. But that every reader may be qualified to form some notion of this miracle of a book, I have subjoined a specimen of it, from the chapter of *the ant*; where we are informed particularly of the cause of the visit which the queen of Sheba (there called *Saba*) made to Solomon, and of the occasion of her conversion from idolatry. I have not selected this passage on account of any special futility to be found in it, for the like absurdities may be observed in every page of the performance; but I have selected it, because it is short, and because it contains a distinct story which bears some relation to a passage of scripture. I use Mr. Sale's version, which is the latest and most approved, omitting only, for the sake of brevity, such supplementary expressions, as have been without necessity inserted by the translator. 'Solomon was David's 'heir; and he said, O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and have 'had all things bestowed on us; this is manifest excellence. And his armies 'were gathered together to Solomon, consisting of genii, and men, and birds; 'and they were led in distinct bands, till they came to the valley of ants. An 'ant said, O ants, enter ye into your habitations, lest Solomon and his army 'tread you under foot, and perceive it not. And he smiled, laughing at her 'words, and said, O Lord, excite me, that I may be thankful for thy favour 'wherewith thou hast favoured me, and my parents; and that I may do that 'which is right and well-pleasing to thee: And introduce me, through thy 'mercy, among thy servants the righteous. And he viewed the birds; and said, 'What is the reason that I see not the lapwing? Is she absent? Verily I will 'chastise her with a severe chastisement, or I will put her to death; unless she 'bring me a just excuse. And she tarried not long, and said, I have viewed 'that which thou hast not viewed; and I come to thee from Saba, with a cer-'tain piece of news. I found a woman to reign over them, who is provided 'with every thing, and hath a magnificent throne. I found her and her peo-'ple to worship the sun, besides God: and Satan hath prepared their works for 'them, and hath turned them aside from the way, (wherefore they are not di-'rected) lest they should worship God, who bringeth to light that which is hidden 'in heaven and earth, and knoweth whatever they conceal, and whatever they 'discover. God! there is no God but he; the Lord of the magnificent throne. 'He said, We shall see whether thou hast spoken the truth, or whether thou 'art a liar. Go with this my letter, and cast it down to them; then turn aside 'from them, and wait for their answer. The queen said, O nobles, verily an 'honourable letter hath been delivered to me; it is from Solomon, and this is 'the tenor thereof, *In the name of the most merciful God, rise not up against me: 'but come, and surrender yourselves to me.* She said, O nobles, advise me in my 'business: I will not resolve on any thing, till ye be witnesses thereof. They 'answered, We are indued with strength, and indued with great prowess in 'war; but the command appertaineth to thee: See therefore what thou wilt 'command. She said, Verily, kings, when they enter a city, waste the same, and

were the reasons, that an engine of such amazing influence was never employed by one who assumed a character so eminent, as *the chief of God's apostles*, and the *seal of the prophets?* Was it the want of address to manage an imposition of this nature?

'abase the most powerful of the inhabitants thereof: And so will these do. 'But I will send gifts to them; and will wait for what those who shall be sent 'shall bring back. And when the ambassador came to Solomon, that prince 'said, Will ye present me with riches? Verily that which God hath given 'me is better than what he hath given you: But ye glory in your gifts. Re-'turn to your people. We will surely come to them with forces, which they 'shall not be able to withstand; and we will drive them out humbled; and they 'shall be contemptible. And Solomon said, O nobles, which of you will bring 'me her throne, before they come and surrender themselves to me? A terrible 'genii answered, I will bring it thee, before thou arise from thy place. And 'one with whom was the knowledge of the scripture said, I will bring it to 'thee, in the twinkling of an eye. And when Solomon saw it placed before him, 'he said, this is a favour of my Lord, that he may make trial of me, whether 'I will be grateful, or whether I will be ungrateful: And he who is grateful, 'is grateful to his own advantage; but if any shall be ungrateful, verily my 'Lord is self-sufficient and magnificent. And he said, Alter her throne that 'she may not know it, to the end we may see whether she be directed, or 'whether she be of those who are not directed. And when she was come, it 'was said, is thy throne like this? She answered, As though it were the same. 'And we have had knowledge bestowed on us before this, and have been re-'signed. But that which she worshipped besides God, had turned her aside, for 'she was of an unbelieving people. It was said to her, Enter the palace. And 'when she saw it, she imagined it to be a great water, and she discovered her 'legs. Solomon said, Verily this is a palace, evenly floored with glass. She 'said, O Lord, verily I have dealt unjustly with my own soul; and I resign 'myself together with Solomon, to God, the Lord of all creatures.' Thus po-verty of sentiment, monstrosity of invention, which always betokens a distem-pered not a rich imagination, and in respect of diction the most turgid verbosity, so apt to be mistaken by persons of a vitiated taste for true sublimity, are the genuine characteristics of the book. They appear almost in every line. The very titles and epithets assigned to God are not exempt from them. The Lord of the daybreak, the Lord of the magnificent throne, the King of the day of judgment, &c. They are pompous and insignificant. If the language of the Alcoran, as the Mahometans pretend, is indeed the language of God, the thoughts are but too evidently the thoughts of men. The reverse of this is the charac-ter of the Bible. When God speaks to men, it is reasonable to think that he addresses them in their own language. In the Bible you will find nothing in-flated, nothing affected in the style. The words are human, but the sentiments are divine. Accordingly there is perhaps no book in the world, as has been often justly observed, which suffers less by a literal translation into any other language.

None who knows the history of this extraordinary personage, will suspect that he wanted either the genius to contrive, or the resolution and dexterity to execute, any practicable expedient for promoting his grand design; which was no less than that extensive despotism both religious and political, he at length acquired. Was it that he had too much honesty to concert and carry on so gross an artifice? Those who believe him to have been an impostor in pretending a divine mission, will hardly suspect him of such delicacy in the methods he would take to accomplish his aim. But in fact there is no colour of reason for such a suggestion. There was no prodigy, no miraculous interposition, which he hesitated to give out, however extravagant, when he saw it would contribute to his ends. Prodigies of which they had no other evidence but his own allegation, he knew his adversaries might *deny*, but could not *disprove*. His scruples therefore, we may well conclude, proceeded not from *probity*, but from *prudence*; and were solely against such miracles as must be subjected to the scrutiny of other people's senses. Was it that miracle-working had before that time become so stale a device, that instead of gaining him the admiration of his countrymen, it would have exposed him to their laughter and contempt? The most cursory perusal of the Alcoran, will, to every man of sense, afford an unanswerable confutation of this hypothesis *. Lastly, was it that he lived

* It is observable, that Mahomet was very much harrassed by the demands and reasonings of his opposers with regard to miracles. They were so far from despising this evidence, that they considered the power of working miracles as a never-failing badge of the prophetical office; and therefore often assured him, by the most solemn oaths and protestations, that they would submit implicitly to his guidance in religion, if he would once gratify them in this particular. This artful man, who does not seem to have been of the same opinion with the essayist, that it was easy for cunning and impudence to impose, in a matter of this kind, on the credulity of the multitude, even, though an ignorant and barbarous multitude, absolutely refused to subject his mission to so hazardous a trial. There is no subject he more frequently recurs to in his Alcoran, being greatly interested to remove the doubts which were raised in the minds of many by his disclaiming this power; a power which till then had ever been looked upon as the prerogative of the prophets. The following are some of the reasons, with which he endeavours to satisfy the people on this head. 1st, The *sovereignty* of God, who is not to be called to account for what he gives or withholds. 2d, The *uselessness* of miracles, because every man is fore-ordained

in an enlightened age, and amongst a civilized and learned people, who were too quick-sighted to be deceived by tricks, which among barbarians might have produced the most astonishing effects? Quite the reverse. He lived in a barbarous age, and amongst an illiterate people, with whom, if with any, he had reason to believe the grossest deceit would prove successful.

What pity was it, that Mahomet had not a counsellor so deeply versed in human nature as the essayist, who could have assured him, that there needed but an effrontery and enterprise; that with these auxiliaries he had reason to hope the most impudent pretences would be crowned with success? The too timid prophet would doubtless have remonstrated against this spirited counsel, insisting that it was one thing to satisfy *friends*, and another thing to silence or convert *enemies*; that it was one thing to impose on men's *intellects*, and another thing to deceive their *senses*: That though an attempt of the last kind should succeed with some, yet if the fraud were detected by any, and he might expect that his adversaries would exert themselves in order to detect it, the whole mystery of craft would be divulged, his friends would become suspicious, and the spectators of such pretended miracles would become daily more prying and critical; that the consequences would infallibly prove fatal to the whole design; and that therefore such a cheat was on no account whatever to be risked. To this methinks I hear the other replying with some earnestness, 'Make but the 'trial, and you will certainly find, that what judgment, nay and 'what senses your auditors have, they will renounce by princi-'ple in those sublime and mysterious subjects; they will imagine 'they see and hear what has no reality, nay whatever you shall 'desire that they should see and hear. Their credulity (for-'give a freedom which my zeal inspires) will increase your im-

either to believe, or to remain in unbelief; and this decree no miracles could alter. 3d, The *experienced inefficacy* of miracles in former times. 4th, The *mercy* of God, who had denied them this evidence, because the sin of their incredulity, in case he had granted it, would have been so heinous, that he could not have respited or tolerated them any longer. 5th, The *abuse* to which miracles would have been exposed from the infidels, who would have either charged them with imposture, or imputed them to magic. See the chapters—of cattle, —of thunder,—of Al Hejir,—of the night-journey,—of the spider,—of the prophets.—See Preface.

'pudence, and your impudence will overpower their credulity. 'The smallest spark may here kindle into the greatest flame; 'because the materials are always prepared for it. The *avi-* 'dum genus auricularum swallow greedily, without examina- 'tion, whatever soothes superstition and promotes wonder.' Whether the judicious reader will reckon that the prophet or his counsellor would have had the better in this debate, I shall not take upon me to decide. One perhaps (if I might be indulged in a conjecture) whose notions are founded in metaphysical refinements, or whose resolutions are influenced by oratorical declamation, will incline to the opinion of the latter. One whose sentiments are the result of a practical knowledge of mankind, will probably subscribe to the judgment of the former, and will allow, that in this instance the CAPTAIN-GENERAL and PROPHET of *Islamism* acted the more prudent part.

Shall we then say, that it was a more *obscure* theatre on which JESUS CHRIST appeared? Were his spectators *more ignorant*, or *less adverse?* The contrary of both is manifest. It may indeed be affirmed with truth, that the religion of the wild Arabs was more repugnant to the doctrine of Mahomet, than the religious dogmas of the Jews were to those of Jesus. But we shall err egregiously, if we conclude thence, that to this repugnancy the repugnancy of disposition in the professors of these religions must be proportionate. It is a fine observation of the most piercing and comprehensive genius, which has appeared in this age, That 'though men have a very strong 'tendency to idolatry, they are nevertheless but little attached 'to idolatrous religions; that though they have no great ten- 'dency to spiritual ideas, they are nevertheless strongly attach- 'ed to religions which enjoin the adoration of a spiritual 'being *.' Hence an attachment in JEWS, CHRISTIANS, and MAHOMETANS, to their respective religions, which was never displayed by POLYTHEISTS of any denomination. But its *spirituality* was not the only cause of adherence which the Jews had to their religion. Every physical, every moral, motive concurred in that people to rivet their attachment, and make them oppose with violence whatever bore the face of innovation. Their religion and polity were so blended as scarcely to be dis-

* De l'esprit des loix, liv. 25. chap. 2.

tinguishable: This engaged their *patriotism*. They were selected of God preferably to other nations: This inflamed their *pride* *. They were all under one spiritual head, the high priest, and had their solemn festivals celebrated in one temple: This strengthened their *union*. The ceremonies of their public worship were magnificent: This flattered their *senses*. These ceremonies also were numerous, and occupied a great part of their time: This, to all the other grounds of attachment, superadded the force of *habit*. On the contrary, the *simplicity* of the gospel, as well as the spirit of *humility*, and *moderation*, and *charity*, and *universality*, (if I may be allowed that term) which it breathed, could not fail to alarm a people of such a cast, and awaken, as in fact it did, the most furious opposition. Accordingly, Christianity had fifty times more success among idolaters than it had among the Jews. I am therefore warranted to assert, that if the miracles of our Lord and his apostles had been an imposture, there could not, on the face of the earth, have been chosen for exhibiting them a more unfavourable theatre than *Judea*. On the other hand, had it been any where practicable, by a display of false wonders, to make converts to a new religion, no where could a project of this nature have been conducted with greater probability of success than in *Arabia*. So much for the contrast there is betwixt the *Christian* MESSIAH and the ORPHAN CHARGE of the *Abu Taleb*. So plain it is, that the *mosque* yields entirely the plea of miracles to the *synagogue* and the *church*.

BUT from HEATHENS and MAHOMETANS, let us turn our eyes to the CHRISTIAN world. The only object here, which merits our attention, as coming under the denomination of miracles ascribed to a new system, and as what may be thought to rival in credibility the miracles of the gospel, are those said to have been performed in the *primitive church*, after the times of the apostles, and after the finishing of the sacred canon. These will probably be ascribed to a new system, since Christianity, for some centuries, was not (as the phrase is) *established*, or, (to speak more properly) *corrupted* by human authority;

* How great influence this motive had, appears from Luke iv. 25, &c. and from Acts xxii. 21, 22.

and since even after such establishment, there remained long in the empire a considerable mixture of idolaters. We have the greater reason here to consider this topic, as it has of late been the subject of very warm dispute, and as the cause of Christianity itself (which I conceive is totally distinct) seems to have been strangely confounded with it. From the manner in which the argument has been conducted, who would not conclude, that both must stand or fall together? Nothing however can be more groundless, nothing more injurious to the religion of Jesus, than such a conclusion.

The learned writer who has given rise to this controversy, not only acknowledges that the falsity of the miracles mentioned by the fathers, is no evidence of the falsity of the miracles recorded in scripture, but that there is even a presumption in favour of these, arising from those forgeries, which he pretends to have detected *. The justness of the remark contained in this acknowledgment, will appear more clearly from the following observations.

Let it be observed, first, that supposing numbers of people are ascertained of the truth of some miracles, whether their conviction arise from sense or from testimony, it will surely be admitted as a consequence, that in all such persons, the presumption against miracles from uncommonness must be greatly diminished, in several perhaps totally extinguished.

Let it be observed, secondly, that if true miracles have been employed successfully in support of certain religious tenets, this success will naturally suggest to those who are zealous of propagating favourite opinions in religion, to recur to the plea of miracles, as the most effectual expedient for accomplishing their end. This they will be encouraged to do on a double account: *first*, they know, that people, from recent experience, are made to expect such a confirmation; *secondly*, they know, that in consequence of this experience, the incredibility, which is the principal obstruction in such an undertaking, is in a manner removed; and there is, on the contrary, as in such circumstances there certainly would be, a promptness in the generality to receive them.

Add to these, that if we consult the history of mankind, or

* Dr. Middleton's prefatory discourse to his letter from Rome.

even our own experience, we shall be convinced, that hardly has one wonderful event actually happened in any country, even where there have not been such visible temptations to forgery, which has not given rise to false rumours of other events similar, but still more wonderful. Hardly has any person or people achieved some exploits truly extraordinary, to whom common report has not quickly attributed many others, as extraordinary at least, if not impossible. As *fame* may, in this respect, be compared to a *multiplying glass*, reasonable people almost always conclude in the same way concerning both; we know that there is not a real object corresponding to every appearance exhibited, at the same time we know that there must be some objects to give rise to the appearances.

I should therefore only beg of our adversaries, that, for argument's sake, they will suppose that the miracles related in the New Testament were really performed; and then, that they will candidly tell us, what, according to their notions of human nature, would, in all likelihood, have been the consequences. They must be very partial to a darling hypothesis, or little acquainted with the world, who will hesitate to own, that, on this supposition, it is not barely probable, but certain, that for a few endowed with the miraculous power, there would soon have arisen numbers of pretenders; that from some miracles well attested, occasion would have been taken to propagate innumerable false reports. If so, with what colour of justice can the detection of many spurious reports among the primitive Christians be considered as a presumption against those miracles, the reality of which is the most plausible, nay the only plausible account that can be given of the origin of such reports: The presumption is too evidently on the opposite side to need illustration.

It is not my intention here to patronize either side of the question which the Doctor's *free inquiry* has occasioned. All that concerns my argument is, barely to evince, and this I imagine has been evinced, that, granting the Doctor's plea to be well founded, there is no presumption arising hence, which tends in the lowest degree to discredit the miracles recorded in holy writ; nay, that there is a contrary presumption. In further confirmation of this truth, let me ask, Were there ever,

in any region of the globe, any similar pretensions to miraculous powers, before that memorable *era*, the publication of the gospel? Let me ask again, Since those pretensions ceased, has it ever been in the power of the most daring enthusiast to revive them any where in favour of a new system? Authentic miracles will, for a time, give a currency to counterfeits; but as the former become less frequent, the latter become more suspected, till at length they are treated with general contempt, and disappear. The danger then is, lest men, ever prone to extremes, become as extravagantly incredulous, as formerly they were credulous. *Laziness*, the true source of both, always inclines us to admit or reject in the *gross*, without entering on the irksome task of considering things in *detail*. In the first instance, knowing some such events to be true, they *admit all without examination*; in the second, knowing some to be false, they *reject all without examination*. A procedure this, which, however excusable in the unthinking herd, is altogether unworthy a philosopher.

But it may be thought, that the claim to miracles in the early ages of the church, continued too long to be supported solely on the credit of those performed by our Lord and his apostles. In order to account for this, it ought to be attended to, that in the course of some centuries, the situation of affairs, with regard to religion, was really inverted. Education, and even superstition, and bigotry, and popularity, which the miracles of Christ and his apostles had to encounter, came gradually to be on the side of those wonders, said to have been performed in after times. If they were potent *enemies*, and such as, we have reason to believe, nothing but the force of truth could vanquish; they were also potent *allies*, and may well be supposed able to give a temporary triumph to falsehood, especially when it had few or no enemies to combat. But in discoursing on the prodigies said to have been performed in primitive times, I have been insensibly carried from the point, to which I proposed in this section to confine myself. From inquiring into miracles ascribed to new systems, I have proceeded to those pleaded in confirmation of systems previously established, and generally received.

Leaving so remote a period, I propose, lastly, to inquire,

whether, since that time, any heresiarch whatever, any founder of a new sect, or publisher of a new system, has pretended to miraculous powers. If the essayist had known of any such pretender, he surely would have mentioned him. But as he has not afforded us any light on this subject, I shall just recal to the remembrance of my reader, those persons who, either as innovators or reformers, have made some figure in the church. They were the persons from whom, if from any, a plea of this kind might naturally have been expected; especially at a time when Europe was either plunged in barbarism, or but beginning to emerge out of it.

Was ever then this high prerogative, the power of working miracles, claimed or exercised by the founders of the sects of the Waldeness and Albigenses? Did Wickliff in England pretend to it? Did Huss or Jerom in Bohemia? To come nearer modern times, Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any other of the reformers, advance this plea? Do such of them as are authors, mention in their writings any miracles they performed, or appeal to them as the evidences of their doctrine? Do contemporary historians allege, that they challenged the faith of their auditors, in consequence of such supernatural powers? I admit, if they did, that their miracles might be ascribed to a new system. For though they pretended only to re-establish the Christian institution, in its native purity, expunging those pernicious interpolations, which a false philosophy had foisted into the doctrinal part, and Pagan superstition into the moral and the ritual; yet as the religion they inculcated greatly differed from the faith and worship of the times, it might, in this respect, be denominated a new system; and would be encountered by all the violence and prejudice, which novelties in religion never fail to excite: Not that the want of real miracles was a presumption against the truth of their doctrine. The God of nature, who is the God of Christians, does nothing in vain. No new revelation was pretended to; consequently there was no occasion for such supernatural support. They appealed to the revelation formerly bestowed, and by all parties acknowledged, as to the proper rule in this controversy: they appealed to the reason of mankind as the judge; and the reason of

mankind was a competent judge of the conformity of their doctrine to this unerring rule.

But how, upon the author's principles, shall we account for this moderation in the reformers? Were they, in his judgment, calm inquirers into truth? Were they dispassionate reasoners in defence of it? Far otherwise. He tells us, 'They may 'safely be pronounced to have been universally inflamed with 'the highest enthusiasm *.' And doubtless we cannot expect from this hand a more amiable picture of their disciples. May not we then, in our turn, safely pronounce, this writer himself being judge, that for a man to imagine he sees what has no reality, to impose in this manner not only on his own understanding, but even on his external senses, is a pitch of delusion higher than the highest enthusiasm can produce, and is to be imputed only to downright frenzy †?

* History of Great Britain, James I. chap. 1.

† Perhaps it will be pleaded, that the working of miracles was considered by the leaders in the reformation as a Popish artifice, and as therefore worthy of being discarded with the other abuses which Popery had introduced. That this was not the light in which miracles were viewed by Luther, who justly possesses the first place in the list of reformers, is evident from the manner in which he argues against Muncer, the apostle of the Anabaptists. This man, without ordination, had assumed the office of a Christian pastor. Against this conduct Luther remonstrates, as being, in his judgment, an usurpation of the sacred function. 'Let him be asked,' says he, 'Who made him a teacher 'of religion? If he answers, God; let him prove it by a visible *miracle*: for 'it is by such signs that God declares himself, when he gives an extraordinary 'mission.' When this argument was afterwards retorted on himself by the Romanists, who desired to know how his own vocation, originally limited and dependent, had become not only unlimited, but quite independent of the hierarchy, from which he had received it; his reply was, That the *intrepidity*, with which he had been enabled to brave so many dangers, and the *success* with which his enterprise had been crowned, ought to be regarded as miraculous: And indeed most of his followers were of this opinion. But whether this opinion was erroneous, or whether the argument against Muncer was conclusive, it is not my business to enquire. Thus much is evident from the story: *first*, That this reformer, far from rejecting miracles as a Romish trick, acknowledged that in some religious questions, they are the only medium of proof; *secondly*, That notwithstanding this, he never attempted, by a show of miracles, to impose on the senses of his hearers; (if they were deceived in thinking that his success and magnanimity were miraculous, it was not their senses, but their understanding that was deceived;) *lastly*, That the Anabaptists themselves, though perhaps the most outrageous fanatics that ever existed, did not pretend to the power of

Since the world began, there hath not appeared a more general propension to the wildest fanaticism, a greater degree of credulity in every claim that was made to the illapses of the Holy Spirit, or a more thorough contempt of all established modes of worship, than appeared in this island about the middle of the last century. It is astonishing, that when the minds of men were intoxicated with enthusiasm; when every new pretender to divine illumination was quickly surrounded by a crowd of followers, and his most incoherent effusions greedily swallowed as the dictates of the Holy Ghost; that in such a Babel of sectaries, none are to be found, who advanced a claim to the power of working miracles; a claim which, in the author's opinion, though false, is easily supported, and wonderfully successful, especially among enthusiasts. Yet to Mr. Hume himself, who has written the history of that period, and who will not be accused of neglecting to mark the extravagancies effected by enthusiasm, I appeal whether this remark be just.

Will it be alleged as an exception, that one or two frantic people among the Quakers, not the leaders of the party, did actually pretend to such a power? Let it be remembered, that this conduct had no other consequences, but to bring upon the pretenders such a general contempt, as in that fanatical and gloomy age, the most unintelligible jargon or glaring nonsense would never have been able to produce.

Will it be urged by the essayist, that even in the beginning of the present century, this plea was revived in Britain by the French prophets, a set of poor visionaries, who, by the barbarity with which they had been treated in their own country, had been wrought up to madness, before they took refuge in this? I must beg leave to remind him, that it is manifest, from the history of those delirious and unhappy creatures, that by no part of their conduct did they so effectually open the eyes of mankind naturally credulous, discredit their own inspirations, and ruin their cause, as by this, not less foolish than presumptuous pretence. Accordingly they are perhaps the only sect, which has sprung up so lately, made so great a bustle for a

working miracles.——*Sleidan, lib.* 5. *Luth. De votis monast. &c. Epist. ad Frid. Sax. Ducem, ap Chytræum.*—See Preface.

while, and which is nevertheless at this day totally extinct. It deserves also to be remarked concerning this people, that though they were mad enough to imagine that they could restore a dead man to life; nay, though they proceeded so far, as to determine and announce before-hand the day and the hour of his resurrection; yet none of them were so distracted as to imagine, that they had seen him rise; not one of them afterwards pretended, that their prediction had been fulfilled. Thus even a frenzy, which had quite disordered their intellects, could not in this instance overpower their senses.

UPON the whole, therefore, till some contrary example be produced, I may warrantably conclude,—that the religion of the BIBLE is the only religion extant, which claims to have been recommended by the evidence of *miracles*;—that though, in different ages and countries, numberless enthusiasts have arisen, extremely few have dared to advance this plea;—that wherever any have had the boldness to recur to it, it has proved the bane, and not the support, of their cause. Thus it has been evinced, as was proposed, that there is no presumption arising from the *history of the world*, which can in the least invalidate the argument from miracles, in defence of Christianity.

SECTION III.

No miracles recorded by historians of other religions are subversive of the evidence arising from the miracles wrought in proof of Christianity, or can be considered as contrary testimony.

'WHY is a miracle regarded as evidence of a religious doc-'trine? Or, What connection is there between an act of power 'admitted to be supernatural, and the truth of a proposition 'pronounced by the person who exerts that power?' These are questions, which some of our infidels have exulted in as unanswerable: And they are questions which it is proper to examine a little; not so much for their own sake, as because a

satisfactory answer to them may throw light on the subject of this section.

A man, I suppose, of an unblemished character, advances doctrines in religion unknown before, but not in themselves apparently impious or absurd. We interrogate him about the manner wherein he attained the knowledge of those doctrines. He affirms, That by no process of reasoning, nor in any other natural way, did he discover them; but that they were revealed to him by the Spirit of God. It must be owned, there is a very strong presumption against the truth of what he says; and it is of consequence to inquire, whence that presumption arises. It is not primarily from any doubt of the man's integrity. If the fact he related were of an ordinary nature, the reputation he has hitherto maintained would secure him from being suspected of an intended deceit. It is not from any absurdity or immoral tendency we perceive in the doctrine itself. It arises principally, if not solely, from these two circumstances, the extreme uncommonness of such a revelation, and the great facility with which people of strong fancy may, in this particular, impose upon themselves. The man, I suppose, acquaints us farther, that God, when he communicated to him the truths he publishes, communicated also the power of working miracles, such as, of giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, of raising the dead, and making whole the maimed. It is evident, that we have precisely the same presumption against his being endued with such a power, as against his having obtained such a revelation. Two things are asserted: There is one presumption, and but one, against them; and it equally affects them both. Whatever proves either assertion, removes the only presumption which hinders our belief of the other. The man, I suppose, lastly, performs the miracles before us, which he said he was commissioned to perform. We can no longer doubt of a supernatural communication. We have now all the evidence which the integrity of the person could give us, as to any ordinary event attested by him, that the doctrine he delivers as from God, is from God, and therefore true.

Nay, we have more evidence than for any common fact, vouched by a person of undoubted probity. As God is both almighty and all-wise, if he has bestowed on any so uncommon

a privilege, it is highly probable, that it is bestowed for promoting some end uncommonly important. And what more important end than to reveal to men that which may be conducive to their present and eternal happiness? It may be said, That, at most, it can only prove the interposal of some power superior to human: The being who interposes is perhaps a bad being, and intends to deceive us. This, it may be allowed, is *possible*; but the other is *probable*. For, *first*, From the light of nature, we have no positive evidence of the existence of such intermediate beings, good or bad. Their existence is therefore only possible. Of the existence and perfections of God, we have the highest moral assurance. *Secondly*, If there were such beings, that raising the dead, and giving sight to the blind, should come within the verge of their power, is also but possible; that they are within the sphere of omnipotence is certain. *Thirdly*, Whatever seems to imply a suspension of any of the established laws of nature, we may presume, with great appearance of reason, proceeds from the author of nature, either *immediately*, or, which amounts to the same thing, *mediately*; that is, by the intervention of some agent impowered by him. To all these there will also accrue presumptions, not only, as was hinted already, from the character of the preacher, but from the apparent tendency of the doctrine, and from the effect it produces on those who receive it. And now the connection between the miracle and the doctrine is obvious. The miracle removes the improbability of a supernatural communication, of which communication it is in fact an irrefragable evidence. This improbability, which was the only obstacle, being removed, the doctrine has, at least, all the evidence of a common fact, attested by a man of known virtue and good sense.

In order to illustrate this further, I shall recur to the instance I have already had occasion to consider, of the Dutchman and the King of Siam. I shall suppose, that, besides the account given by the former of the freezing of water in Holland, he had informed the prince of the astonishing effects produced by gunpowder, with which the latter had been entirely unacquainted. Both accounts appear to him alike incredible, or, if you please, absolutely impossible. Some time afterwards, the Hollander gets imported into the kingdom a sufficient

quantity of gunpowder, with the necessary artillery. He informs the monarch of this acquisition; who having permitted him to make experiments on some of his cattle and buildings, perceives, with inexpressible amazement, that all the European had told him, of the celerity and violence with which this destructive powder operates, is strictly conformable to truth. I ask any considerate person, Would not this be enough to restore the stranger to the Indian's good opinion, which, I suppose, his former experienced honesty had entitled him to? Would it not remove the incredibility of the account he had given of the freezing of water in northern countries? Yet, if abstractly considered, what connection is there between the effects of gunpowder and the effects of cold? But the presumption arising from miracles, in favour of the doctrine published by the performer, as divinely inspired, must be incomparably stronger; since from what has been said, it appears to have several peculiar circumstances, which add weight to it. It is evident, then, that miracles are a proper proof, and perhaps the only proper proof, of a revelation from Heaven. But it is also evident, that miracles may be wrought for other purposes, and may not be intended as proofs of any doctrine whatsoever.

THUS much being premised, I shall examine another very curious argument of the essayist: 'There is no testimony,' says he, 'for any prodigy, that is not opposed by an infinite 'number of witnesses; so that not only the miracle destroys the 'credit of the testimony, but even the testimony destroys it-'self*.' In order to illustrate this strange position, he observes, that, 'in matters of religion, whatever is different is 'contrary; and that it is impossible the religions of ancient 'Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, and of China, should all of them 'be established on any solid foundation. Every miracle there-'fore pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions, '(and all of them abound in miracles) as its direct scope is to 'establish the particular system to which it is attributed, so it 'has the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every 'other system. In destroying a rival system, it likewise de-'stroys the credit of those miracles, on which that system was

* Page 190, &c.

'established; so that all the prodigies of different religions are 'to be regarded as contrary facts, and the evidences of these 'prodigies, whether weak or strong, as opposite to each other.' Never did any author more artfully avail himself of indefinite expressions. With what admirable sleight does he vary his phrases, so as to make the inadvertent reader look upon them as synonymous, when in fact their significations are totally distinct? Thus what, by a most extraordinary idiom, is called at first, 'miracles wrought in a religion,' we are next to regard, as 'miracles attributed to a particular system,' and lastly, as 'miracles, the direct scope of which is to establish that system.' Every body, I will venture to say, in beginning to read the sentence, if he forms any notion of what the author means by a 'miracle wrought in religion,' understands it barely as a 'miracle wrought among those who profess a particular religion,' the words appearing to be used in the same latitude, as when we call the traditional tales current among the Jews, though they should have no relation to religion, Jewish tales; and those in like manner Mahometan or Pagan tales, which are current among Mahometans or Pagans. Such a miracle, the reader, ere he is aware, is brought to consider as a miracle attributed to a particular system; nay further, as 'a miracle, the 'direct scope of which is to establish that system.' Yet nothing can be conceived more different than the meaning of these expressions, which are here jumbled together as equivalent.

It is plain, that all the miracles of which there is any record, come under the first denomination. They are all supposed to have been wrought before men, or among men; and wherever there are men, there is religion of some kind or other. Perhaps too, all may, in a very *improper* sense, be attributed to a religious system. They all seem to imply an interruption of the ordinary course of nature. Such an interruption, wherever it is observed, will be ascribed to the agency of those divinities that are adored by the observers, and so may be said to be attributed by them to their own system. But where are the miracles (those of holy writ excepted) of which you can say with propriety, it is their direct scope to establish a particular system? Must we not then be strangely blinded by the charm of a few

ambiguous terms, if we are made to confound things so widely different? Yet this confusion is the very basis on which the author founds his reasoning, and rears this tremendous doctrine; That 'a miracle of Mahomet, or any of his successors,' and, by parity of reason, a miracle of Christ, or any of his apostles, 'is 'refuted (as if it had been mentioned, and had, in express 'terms, been contradicted) by the testimony of Titus Livius, 'Plutarch, Tacitus, and of all the authors, Chinese, Grecian, 'and Roman Catholic, who have related any miracles in their 'particular religions.' Here all the miracles, that have been related by men of different religions, are blended, as coming under the common denomination of miracles the direct scope of which was to establish those particular religious systems; an insinuation, in which there is not even the shadow of truth.

That the reader may be satisfied on this point, I must beg his attention to the following observations concerning the miracles of profane history. *First*, Many facts are related as miraculous, where we may admit the fact, without acknowledging the miracle. Instances of this kind we have in relations concerning comets, eclipses, meteors, earthquakes, and such-like. *Secondly*, The miracles may be admitted as genuine, and the manner in which historians account for them, rejected as absurd. The one is a matter of testimony, the other of conjecture. In this a man is influenced by education, by prejudices, by received opinions. In every country, as was observed already, men will recur to the theology of the place, for the solution of every phenomenon supposed miraculous. But, that it was the scope of the miracle to support the theology, is one thing; and that fanciful men thought they discovered in the theology the causes of the miracle, is another. The inhabitants of Lystra, accounted, from the principles of their own religion, for the miracle performed in their city by Paul and Barnabas *. Was it therefore the scope of that miracle to support the Lycaonian religion? *Thirdly*, Many miracles are recorded, as produced directly by Heaven, without the ministration of men: By what construction are these discovered to be proofs of a particular system? Yet these also, wherever they happen, will be accounted for by the natives of the country, from the principles of their

* Acts xiv. 8, &c.

own superstition. Had any of the Pagan citizens escaped the ruin in which Sodom was miraculously involved, they would doubtless have sought for the cause of this destruction in the established mode of polytheism, and would probably have imputed it to the vengeance of some of their deities, incurred by the neglect of some frivolous ceremony. Would it therefore have been the scope of the miracle to confirm this nonsense? *Fourthly*, Even miracles said to have been performed by a man, are no evidences of the truth of that man's opinions; such, I mean, as he pretends not to have received by revelation, but by the exercise of reason, by education, or by information from other men; no more than a man's being endowed with bodily strength greater than ordinary, would prove him to be superior to others in his mental faculties. I conclude with declaring, that if instances shall be produced, of miracles wrought by men of probity, in proof of doctrines which they affirm to have been revealed to them from Heaven, and which are repugnant to the doctrine of the Bible, then I shall think it equitable to admit, that religious miracles contradict one another. Then will reasonable people be reduced to the dilemma, either of disproving the allegations on one side, or of acknowledging that miracles can be no evidence of revelation. No attempt however has as yet been made by any writer to produce an instance of this kind.

'But will nothing less satisfy?' replies the author. 'Will 'not the predictions of augurs and oracles, and the intimations 'said to have been given by the gods or saints in dreams and 'visions, of things not otherwise knowable by those to whom 'they were thus intimated; will not these, and such-like prodi-'gies, serve in some degree as evidence?' As evidence of what? Shall we say, of any religious principles conveyed at the same time by revelation? No, it is not even pretended, that there were any such principles so conveyed: but as evidence of principles which had been long before entertained, and which were originally imbibed from education, and from education only. That the evidence here, supposing the truth of the facts, is at best but very indirect, and by no means on the same footing with that of the miracles recorded in the gospel, might be easily evinced, if there were occasion. But there is in reality

no occasion, since there is no such evidence of the facts as can justly entitle them to our notice. Let it be remembered, that in the fourth section of the first part, it was shown, that there is the greatest disparity in respect of evidence, betwixt miracles performed in proof of a religion *to be* established, and in *contradiction* to opinions generally received; and miracles performed, on the contrary, in support of a religion *already* established, and in *confirmation* of opinions generally received; that, in the former case, there is the strongest presumption *for* the miracles, in the latter *against* them. Let it also be remembered, that in the preceding section it was shown, that the religion of the Bible is the only religion extant, which claims to have been ushered into the world by miracles; that this prerogative neither the Pagan religion, the Mahometan, nor the Roman Catholic, can, with any appearance of reason, arrogate; and that, by consequence, there is one of the strongest presumptions possible *for* the miracles of the gospel, which is not only wanting in the miracles of other religions, but which is contrasted by the strongest presumption possible *against* these miracles. And though this presumption should not, in all cases, be accounted absolutely insuperable, we must at least say, it gives an immense superiority to the proofs of Christianity. It were an endless and a fruitless task, to canvass particularly the evidence of all the pretended miracles either of Paganism or Popery, (for on this head Mahometanism is much more modest) but as the author has selected some, which he considers as the best attested, of both religions, these shall be examined severally in the two subsequent sections. From this examination a tolerable judgment may be formed concerning the pretensions of these two species of superstition.

But from what has been said, it is evident, that the contrariety which the author pretends to have discovered in the miracles said to have been wrought, as he expresses it, in different religions, vanishes entirely on a close inspection. He is even sensible of this himself; and as is customary with orators, the more inconclusive his reasons are, so much the more positive are his assertions. 'This argument,' says he, 'may appear over subtile and refined;' indeed so subtile and refined, that it is invisible altogether; '*but*——is not *in reality* differ-

'ent from the reasoning of a judge, who supposes that the 'credit of two witnesses maintaining a crime against any one, is 'destroyed by the testimony of two others, who, affirm him to 'have been two hundred leagues distant, at the same instant, 'when the crime is said to have been committed.' After the particle *but*, with which this clause begins, the reader naturally expects such an explication of the argument, as will convince him, that though *subtile* and *refined*, it hath *solidity* and *strength*. Instead of this, he hath only the author's *word* warranting it to be good to all intents: 'But *is not in reality* different,' &c. The analogy between his *example* and his *argument*, seems to be but very distant *; I shall therefore, without any comment, leave it with the reader as I find it.

THUS it appears, that, for aught the author has as yet proved, no miracles recorded by historians of other religions are subversive of the evidence arising from the miracles wrought in proof of Christianity, or can justly be considered as contrary testimony.

SECTION IV.

Examination of the PAGAN *miracles mentioned by Mr. Hume.*

SHOULD one read attentively the *Essay on Miracles*, and consider it solely as a philosophical disquisition on an abstract question, like most of the other pieces in the same collection; he could not fail to wonder, what had induced the author so suddenly to change sides in the debate, and, by doing so, to

* My French translator remarks, that, in a case which he supposes and illustrates, the analogy would be both close and striking. I admit, that in the case supposed by him, it would be so. But of such cases, I had observed before, that no example had been produced. The miracles performed by Moses were manifestly in proof of his mission, and consequently of the unity of the Godhead, his fundamental doctrine. The like may be said of the miracles of Jesus, in regard to the doctrine which he taught. But who can be said to have performed miracles in proof of polytheism? I know not any. The remoteness of the analogy in the example adduced by Mr. Hume was not meant as affirmed of any case supposable, but of any which had actually occurred.

contradict himself in terms the most express. Does he not, in the latter part of that performance, as warmly contend for the reality of some miracles, as he had pleaded in the former part for the *impossibility* of all? It is true, he generally concludes concerning those, that they are 'gross and palpable falsehoods.' But this serves only to render his conduct the more mysterious, as that conclusion is always preceded by an attempt to evince, that we have the greatest reason to receive them as 'certain 'and infallible truths.' Nay, so entirely doth his *zeal* make him forget even his most positive assertions, (and what inconsistencies may not be dreaded from an excess of *zeal!*) that he shows minutely, we have those very evidences for the miracles he is pleased to patronize, which, he had strenuously argued, were not to be found in support of any miracles whatever.

'There is not to be found,' he affirms *, 'in all history, a 'miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such un-'questioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure 'us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted in-'tegrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to 'deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of 'mankind, as to have a great deal to lose, in case of being de-'tected in any falsehood; and at the same time attesting facts 'performed in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part 'of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable.' We need only turn over a few pages of the *Essay*, and we shall find the author taking great pains to convince us, that all these circumstances concurred in support of certain miracles, which, notwithstanding his *general resolution*, he has thought fit to honour with a very particular attention.

He has not indeed told us *how many* witnesses, in his way of reckoning, will constitute 'a sufficient number;' but for some miracles which he relates, he gives us *clouds* of witnesses, one cloud succeeding another: for the Molinists, who tried to discredit them, 'soon found themselves overwhelmed by a cloud 'of *new* witnesses, one hundred and twenty in number †.' As to the character of the witnesses, 'most of them were persons 'of credit and substance in Paris ‡;' again, those miracles 'were attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, before

* Page 183. † Page 197. in the note. ‡ Ib.

'judges of unquestioned integrity *;' and, they were proved by 'witnesses, before the officialty or bishop's court of Paris, under 'the eyes of Cardinal Noailles, whose character for integrity 'and capacity was never contested even by his enemies †;' again, 'the secular clergy of France, particularly the rectors of 'cures of Paris, give testimony to these impostures, than whom 'no clergy are more celebrated for strictness of life and man-'ners ‡.' Once more, one principal witness, 'Monsieur de 'Montgeron, was counsellor or judge of the parliament of Pa-'ris, a man of figure and character §;' another 'no less a man 'than the Duc de Chatillon, a Duke and Peer of France, of the 'highest rank and family ||.' It is strange, if *credit*, and *substance*, and *distinction*, and *capacity*, are not sufficient securities to us, that the witnesses were not themseves deluded; it is strange, if *uncontested integrity*, and *eminent strictness* of life and manners, cannot remove 'all suspicion of any design in 'them to deceive others;' it is strange, if one who was *counsellor* of the parliament of Paris, a man of figure and character, and if another who was a *Duke* and Peer of France, of the highest rank and family, had not 'a great deal to lose, in case 'of being detected in any falsehood:' nay, and if all those witnesses of *credit* and *distinction*, 'had not also a great deal to 'lose;' since the 'Jesuits, a learned body, supported by the 'civil magistrate, were determined enemies to those opinions, 'in whose favour the miracles were said to have been wrought ¶;' and since *Monsieur* Herault, the lieutenant '*de police*, of whose 'great reputation, all who have been in France about that time, 'have heard; and whose vigilance, penetration, activity, and ex-'tensive intelligence, have been much talked of; since this magis-'trate, who by the nature of his office is almost absolute, was in-'vested with full powers on purpose to suppress these miracles, 'and frequently seized and examined the witnesses and subjects 'of them; though he could never reach any thing satisfactory 'against them **.' As to the only remaining circumstance, 'their being performed in a public manner, and in a celebrated 'part of the world,' this concurred also. They were perform-

* Page 195. † Page 196, in the note. ‡ Page 199, in the note.
§ Page 195, in the note. || Page 199, in the note.
¶ Page 195. ** Page 197, in the note.

ed, we are told, 'in a learned age, and on the most eminent 'theatre that is now in the world *;' besides, twenty-two rectors of '*cures* of Paris, with infinite earnestness, pressed the 'Archbishop, an enemy to the Jansenists, to examine those 'miracles, which they assert to be known to the whole world, 'and indisputably certain †.'

Thus the essayist has laid us under the disagreeable necessity of inferring, that he is either very rash in his general assertions, or uses very great amplification in his particular narrations. Perhaps in both inferences, we shall find, upon inquiry, that there is some truth. In his *History of Great Britain*, he gives us notice ‡, that he addressed himself 'to a more distant 'posterity, than will ever be reached by any local or temporary 'theology.' Why did he not likewise, in writing the *Essays*, entertain this grand idea? It would have been of use to him. It would have prevented his falling into those inconsistencies, which his too great attention and antipathy to what he calls a *local or temporary theology*, only could occasion; and which, when that theology, according to his hypothesis, shall be extinct, and when all our religious controversies shall be forgotten, must appear unaccountable and ridiculous. People will not then have the means of discovering, what is so obvious to us, his contemporaries, that he only assumes the appearance of an advocate for some miracles, which are disbelieved by the generality of Protestants, his countrymen, in order, by the comparison, to vilify the miracles of sacred writ, which are acknowledged by them.

But to descend to particulars, I shall begin with considering those miracles, for which the author is indebted to the ancient Pagans. First, in order to convince us, how easy a matter it is for cunning and impudence to impose by false miracles on the credulity of barbarians, he introduces the story of Alexander of Pontus §. The justness of the account he gives of this impostor from Lucian, I shall not dispute. But that it may appear, how little the Christian religion is affected by this relation, notwithstanding some insinuations he has intermixt with it, I shall make the following remarks.

* Page 195. † Page 196, in the note. ‡ James I. chap. 2. § Page 188.

It is of importance to know, what was the profession of this once so famous, though now forgotten Paphlagonian. Was he a publisher of strange gods? No *. Was he the founder of a new system in religion? No. What was he then? He was no other than a professed fortune-teller. What were the arts by which he carried on this gainful trade? The essayist justly remarks, that 'it was a wise policy in him, to lay the 'first scene of his impostures in a country, where the people 'were extremely ignorant and stupid, and ready to swallow the 'grossest delusion.' For, 'had Alexander fixed his residence 'at Athens, the philosophers of that renowned mart of learn-'ing, had immediately spread through the whole Roman em-'pire their sense of the matter; which, being supported by so 'great authority, and displayed by all the force of reason and 'eloquence, had entirely opened the eyes of mankind.' I shall beg leave to remark another instance of good policy in him. He attempted not to gain the veneration of the multitude by opposing, but by adopting their religious prejudices. His whole plan of deceit was founded in the established superstition. The author himself will acknowledge, it would have been extreme folly in him to have acted otherwise: And all the world, I believe, will agree in thinking, that, in that case, he could not have had the smallest probability of success. What were the miracles which he wrought? I know of none, unless we will dignify with that name, some feats of legerdemain, performed mostly by candle-light: which, in many parts of Europe, we may daily see equalled, nay far exceeded, by those of modern jugglers. Add to these some oracles he pronounced, concerning which, if we may form a judgment from the account and specimen given us by Lucian, we should conclude, that, like other Heathen oracles, they were generally

* The learned and judicious author of the *Observations on the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul*, has inadvertently said of Alexander, that he introduced a *new god* into Pontus. The truth is, he only exhibited a reproduction of *Esculapius*, a well known deity in those parts, to whom he gave indeed the *new name* GLYCON. In this there was nothing unsuitable to the genius of the mythology. Accordingly, we do not find, that either the priests or the people, were in the least alarmed for the religion of the country, or ever charged Alexander as an *innovator* in religious matters. On the contrary, the greatest enemies he had to encounter, were not the religionists, but the latitudinarians.

unintelligible, equivocal, or false. Before whom did he exhibit his wonders? Before none, if he could help it, that were not thorough believers in the popular system. His nocturnal mysteries were always introduced with an AVAUNT to *Atheists, Christians,* and *Epicureans:* And indeed it was dangerous for any such to be present at them. Mr. Hume says, that, 'from 'his ignorant Paphlagonians, he was enabled to proceed to the 'enlisting of votaries among the Grecian philosophers.' On what authority he advances this, I have not been able to discover. He adds, 'and men of the most eminent rank and 'distinction in Rome.' Lucian mentions one man of rank, Rutilianus, among the votaries of the prophet; an honest man he calls him, but at the same time the weakest, the most superstitious that ever lived. As to the military expedition, which one would imagine from Mr. Hume's expression, the Emperor had resolved on, in consequence of the encouragement which the delusive prophecies of this impostor gave him, we find, on the contrary, it was undertaken, before those prophecies were uttered. But further, Did Alexander risk any thing in assuming the character of the *interpreter* ESCULAPIUS? Did he lose, or did he suffer any thing in defence of it? Quite the reverse. He enriched himself by this most ingenious occupation. I shall say nothing of the picture which Lucian gives of his morals, of the many artifices which he used, or of the atrocious crimes which he perpetrated. It must be owned, that the principal scope for calumny and detraction is in what concerns the private life and moral character. Lucian was an enemy, and, by his own account, had received the highest provocation. But I avoid every thing, on this topic, that can admit a question.

Where, I would gladly know, lies the resemblance between this impostor and the first publishers of the gospel? Every one, on the most superficial review, may discover, that, in all the material circumstances, they are perfect contrasts. There appears not therefore to be great danger in the poignant remark with which the author concludes this relation; 'Though *much* '*to be wished,* it does not always happen, that every *Alexander* 'meets with a *Lucian,* ready to expose and detect his impos-'tures.' Lest the full import of this emphatical clause should

not be apprehended, the author has been still more explicit in the note: 'It may here perhaps be objected, that I proceed 'rashly, and form my notions of Alexander, merely from the 'account given of him by Lucian, a professed enemy. *It were* '*indeed to be wished*, that some of the accounts published by 'his followers and accomplices had remained. The opposition 'and contrast betwixt the character and conduct of the same 'man, as drawn by a friend or an enemy, is as strong, even in 'common life, much more in these religious matters, as that 'betwixt any two men in the world, betwixt Alexander and St. 'Paul for instance.' Who can forbear to lament the uncommon distress of an author, obliged every moment to recur to unavailing wishes? Mr. Hume, however, in this calamitous situation, solaces himself as well as he can, by supposing what he cannot assert. He supposes what would have been the case, if his wishes could have been gratified; and artfully insinuates, in this manner to his readers, that if we had the character and conduct of the apostle, delineated by as able an enemy as Lucian, we should find the portrait as ugly as that of Alexander.

Let us then for once suppose, what the author so ardently wishes, that such an enemy had undertaken the history of Paul of Tarsus. I can easily conceive what a different representation we should, in that case, have had, of the mental endowments and moral disposition, as well as of the inducements and views of this Christian missionary. I can conceive also, that both his actions and discourses might have been strangely disfigured. But if the biographer had maintained any regard, I say not, to truth, but to probability, there are some things, we may be absolutely certain, he would never have advanced. He would not surely have said of Paul, that he was by profession a cunning man, or *conjurer*; one who, for a little money, either told people their fortunes, or taught them how to recover stolen goods. He would not, I suppose, have pretended, that wherever the apostle went, he flattered the superstition of the populace, in order to gain them, and founded all his pretensions on the popular system. He would not have alleged, that Paul *enriched* himself, or that he could ever have the prospect of enriching himself, by his vocation; nay, or that he risked nothing,

or suffered nothing, by it. He could not have said concerning him, that he *declined* the audience or scrutiny of men, whose opinions in religion differed from those on which his mission was founded. He durst not have imputed to him the *wise policy* of laying the scene of his impostures, only where ignorance, barbarism, and stupidity prevailed: As it is unquestionable, that our apostle traversed great part, not only of Asia Minor, but of Macedonia, and Achaia; fixed his residence eighteen months at Corinth, a city not less celebrated for the polite arts, than for its populousness and riches; preached publicly at Athens, before the Stoics and Epicureans, and even before the Areopagus, the most venerable judicature in Greece; not afraid of what the philosophers of that renowned mart of learning might spread through the whole Roman empire concerning him and his doctrine; nay, and lastly preached at Rome itself, the mistress and metropolis of the world.

The reader will observe, that, in this comparison, I have shunned every thing that is of a private, and therefore of a dubious nature. The whole is founded on such actions and events as were notorious; which it is not in the power of contemporary historians to falsify; such with regard to Alexander, as a *votary* could not have dissembled; such with regard to Paul, as an *enemy* durst not have denied. We are truly indebted to the essayist, who intending to exhibit a *rival* to the apostle, has produced a character which, we find, on making the comparison, serves only for a foil. Truth never shines with greater lustre, than when confronted with falsehood. The evidence of our religion, how strong soever, appears not so irresistible, considered by itself, as when by comparison we perceive, that none of those artifices and circumstances attended its propagation, which the whole course of experience shows to be necessary to render imposture successful.

THE next topic on which the ingenious author has bestowed some flourishes, is the miracle 'which Tacitus reports of Ves-'pasian, who cured a blind man in Alexandria, by means of his 'spittle, and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot, in obe-'dience to a vision of the god Serapis, who had enjoined them 'to have recourse to the emperor, for these miraculous and ex-

'traordinary cures *.' The story he introduces with informing us, that it is 'one of the best attested miracles in all profane 'history.' If so, it will the better serve for a sample of what may be expected from that quarter. 'Every circumstance,' he tells us, 'seems to add weight to the testimony, and might be 'displayed at large, with all the force of argument and elo-'quence, if any one were now concerned to enforce the evi-'dence of that exploded and idolatrous superstition.' For my part, were I concerned to enforce the evidence of that exploded and idolatrous superstition, I should not wish the story were in better hands than in the author's. He is by no means deficient in eloquence; and if sometimes there appear a deficiency in argument, that is not imputable to him, but to the subject, which cannot furnish him with any better: And though I do not suspect him to be in the least concerned to re-establish Paganism, yet it is well known, that hatred to his adversary may as strongly animate an advocate to exert himself, as affection to his client.

But to proceed to the story: First, the author pleads 'the 'gravity, solidity, age, and probity of so great an Emperor, 'who, through the whole course of his life, conversed in a 'familiar way with his friends and courtiers, and never affected 'those extraordinary airs of divinity assumed by Alexander 'and Demetrius.' To this character, the justness of which I intend not to controvert, I shall beg leave to add, what is equally indubitable, and much to the purpose, that no Emperor showed a stronger inclination to corroborate his title by the sanction of the gods, than the prince of whom he is speaking. This, doubtless, he thought the more necessary in his case, as he was of an obscure family, and nowise related to any of his predecessors. How fond he was of pleading *visions*, and *presages*, and *augaries*, in his favour, all the world knows †.

The author adds, 'The historian, a contemporary writer, 'noted for candour and veracity, and withal the greatest and 'most penetrating genius perhaps of all antiquity, and so free 'from any tendency to superstition and credulity, that he even

* Page 192, &c.

† Auctoritas, et quasi majestas quaedam, ut scilicet inopinato et adhuc novo principi deerat, haec quoque accessit. SUETON.

'lies under the contrary imputation of atheism and profaneness.' This would say a great deal, if the character of the historian were of any moment in the question. Doth Tacitus pretend that he was himself a witness of the miracle? No. Doth he mention it as a thing which he believes? No. In either case I acknowledge, that the reputation of the *relater* for candour and penetration, must have added weight to the relation, whether considered as his *testimony*, or barely as his *opinion*. But is it fair to plead the veracity of the writer in proof of every popular rumour mentioned by him? His veracity is only concerned to satisfy us, that it was actually reported, as he relates; or that the attempt was made, and the miracle pretended; a point which, I presume, nobody would have disputed, although the authority had been less than that of Tacitus. Indeed the historian does not say directly, whether he believes the miracle or not; but by his manner of telling it, he plainly insinuates, that he thought it ridiculous. In introducing it, he intimates the utility of such reports to the Emperor's cause. 'By which,' says he, 'the favour of Heaven, and the appointment of the 'gods, might be urged in support of his title *.' When he names the word *Serapis*, as warning the blind man to recur to Vespasian, he adds, in evident contempt and derision of his godship, 'Who is adored above all others by the *Egyptians*, a 'people addicted to superstition †.' Again he speaks of the Emperor, as induced to hope for success, by the persuasive tongues of flatterers ‡. A serious believer of the miracle would hardly have used such a style in relating it. But to what purpose did he then relate it? The answer is easy. Nothing could be more characteristic of the *Emperor*, or could better show the arts he had recourse to, and the hold which flattery had of him; nothing could be more characteristic of the *Alexandrians*, the people amongst whom the miracle is said to have been wrought.

'The persons,' says the essayist, 'from whose testimony he 'related the miracle, were of established character for judgment

* Queis cœlestis favor, et quaedam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur.

† Quem dedita superstitionibus gens ante alios colit.

‡ Vocibus adulantium in spem induci.

'and veracity, *as we may well suppose*; eye-witnesses of the fact, 'and confirming their verdict, after the Flavian family were de- 'spoiled of the empire, and could no longer give any reward as 'the price of a lie.' Persons of *established character for judgment and veracity!* Who told Mr. Hume so? It was not Tacitus. He only denominates them in general*: 'They who 'were present,' and 'a crowd of by-standers.' The author, conscious that he advances this without even the shadow of authority has subjoined, in order to palliate the matter, *as we may well suppose.* An admirable expedient for supplying a weak plea, with those convenient circumstances that can give it strength! When fact fails, which is not seldom the case, we need but apply to supposition, whose help is always near. But if this be allowed to take the place of argument, I see no reason why I may not avail myself of the privilege of supposing, as well as the author. The witnesses then, I will suppose, were mostly an ignorant rabble: But I wrong my cause; I have a better foundation than supposal, having Tacitus himself, and all antiquity on my side, when I add, deeply immersed in *superstition*, particularly attached to the worship of *Serapis*, and keenly engaged in support of *Vespasian*, ALEXANDRIA having been the first city of note that publicly declared for him. Was it then matter of surprise, that a story, which at once soothed the superstition of the populace, and favoured their political schemes, should gain ground among them? Can we justly wonder, that the wiser few, who were not deceived, should connive at, or even contribute to promote a deceit, which was highly useful to the cause wherein themselves were embarked, and at the same time highly grateful to the many? Lastly, can we be surprised that any, who, for seven and twenty years, had, from motives of interest and ambition, and popularity, propagated a falsehood, should not afterwards be willing to expose themselves as liars?

The author finishes the story thus: 'To which if we add the 'public nature of the facts related, it will appear, that no evi- 'dence can well be supposed stronger for so gross and so palpa- 'ble a falsehood.' As to the nature of the facts, we are told by Tacitus, that when Vespasian consulted the physicians, whether

* Qui interfuere.——Quae astabat multitudo.

such maladies were curable by human art, they declared *, that 'in the one the power of sight was not extinct, but would re-'turn, were the obstacles removed; that in the other, the joints 'had suffered some dislocation, which by a salutary pressure 'might be redressed.' From this account we are naturally led to conclude, that the disorders were not so conspicuous, but that either they might have been feigned, where they were not; or that cures might have been pretended, where none were performed. I think it is even a further presumption of the truth of this conclusion, that Suetonius, the only other Roman historian who mentions the miracle, (I know not how he hath been overlooked by Mr. Hume) differs from Tacitus, in the account he gives of the lameness. The one represents it as being in the hand, the other as in the leg †.

There are other circumstances regarding this story, on which I might make some remarks; but shall forbear, as it is impossible to enter into a minute discussion of particulars, that appear but trivial, when considered severally, without growing tiresome to the bulk of readers. I shall therefore only subjoin these simple questions. *First*, What emperor or other potentate was flattered in his dignity and pretensions by the miracles of our Lord? What eminent personage found himself interested to support, by his authority and influence, the credit of these miracles? *Again*, What popular superstition or general and rooted prejudices were they calculated to confirm? These two circumstances, were there no other, make the greatest odds imaginable betwixt the miracles of VESPASIAN and those of JESUS CHRIST.

So much for the PAGAN miracles mentioned by the author.

* Huic non exesam vim luminis, et redituram, si pellerentur obstantia: illi elapsos in pravum artus, si salubris vis adhibeatur, posse integrari.

† Manum aeger. TACITUS. Debili crure. SUETONIUS. Mr. Hume, in the last edition of the *Essay*, mentions Suetonius, but takes no notice of this difference between his account and that of Tacitus.

SECTION V.

Examination of the POPISH *Miracles mentioned by Mr. Hume.*

THE author soon descends from ancient to modern times, and leaving *Paganism*, recurs to *Popery*, a much more fruitful source of lying wonders.

THE first of this kind he takes notice of*, is a Spanish miracle recorded in the memoirs of Cardinal *de Retz*. The story, he says, is very memorable, and may well deserve our consideration. 'When that intriguing politician fled into Spain, to 'avoid the persecution of his enemies, he passed through Sa- 'ragossa, the capital of Arragon: where he was shown, in the 'cathedral church, a man who had served twenty years as a door- 'keeper of the church, and was well known to every body in 'town, that had ever paid their devotions at that cathedral. 'He had been for so long a time wanting a leg; but recovered 'that limb, by the rubbing of holy oil upon the stump; *and, 'when the cardinal examined it, he found it to be a true na- 'tural leg, like the other.*' Would not any person imagine, from the last words of the sentence, that the cardinal had ordered the man to put off his shoes and stockings, that, by touch as well as by sight, he might be satisfied there was no artifice used, but that both his legs consisted of genuine flesh and bone? Yet the truth is, his eminency did not think it worth while to examine any one circumstance of this wonderful narration, but contented himself with reporting it precisely as it had been told him. His words literally translated are, 'In 'that church they showed me a man, whose business it was to 'light the lamps, of which they have a prodigious number, tell- 'ing me, that he had been seen seven years at the gate, with 'one leg only. I saw him there with two†.' Not one word

* Page 193, &c.

† L'on m'y montra un homme, que servoit à allumer les lampes, qui y sont en nombre prodigieux; et l'on me dit, qu'on l'y avoit vu sept ans a la porte de cette eglise, avec une seule jambe. Je l'y vis avec deux. *Liv.* 4. *l'an* 1654.

of trial or examination, or even so much as a single question asked on the subject; not a syllable of his finding the leg to be either true or false, natural or artificial, like the other or unlike. I have a better opinion both of the candour and of the good sense of Mr. Hume, than to imagine, he would have designedly misrepresented this story, in order to render it fitter for his purpose. I believe the source of this error has been solely the trusting to his memory in the relation which he gave, and not taking the trouble to consult the passage in the memoirs. This conjecture appears the more probable, as he has made some other alterations, which are no-wise conducive to his design; such as, that the man had been seen in the church *twenty* years wanting a leg, and that he was a *door-keeper*; whereas the memoir-writer says only *seven* years, and that he was a *lamplighter* *.

'This miracle was vouched,' says the author, 'by all the canons of the church; and the whole company in town were appealed to, for a confirmation of the fact, whom the Cardinal found, by their zealous devotion, to be thorough believers of the miracle.' It is true, that the company in town were appealed to, by those ecclesiastics; but it is also true, that *de Retz*, by his own account, seems not to have asked any man a question on the subject. He acknowledges indeed, that an anniversary festival, instituted in commemoration of the miracle, was celebrated by a vast concourse of people of all ranks.

'Here,' continues the essayist, 'the relater was also contemporary to the supposed prodigy, of an incredulous and libertine character, as well as of great genius.' But of what weight, in this affair, is either the genius or the incredulity of the relater, since, by Mr. Hume's confession, he had no faith in the relation? Strange indeed is the use which the essayist makes of this circumstance. 'What *adds mightily*,' says he,

* Since finishing this tract, I have seen an edition of Mr. Hume's Essays, &c. later than that here referred to. It is printed at London, 1760. I must do the author the justice to observe, that, in this edition, he has corrected the mistake, as to the cardinal's examining the man's leg, of which he only says, 'The 'cardinal assures us, that he saw him with two legs.' He still calls him a *door-keeper*, and says, that he had served *twenty* years in this capacity. In the edition 1767, mentioned in the Preface, he has corrected the latter of these errors, and said *seven years*, but retains the former.

'to the force of the evidence, and may double our surprise on this 'occasion, is, that the Cardinal himself, who relates the story, 'seems not to give any credit to it.' It does not in the least surprise me, that the cardinal gives no credit to this relation; but I am beyond measure surprised, that Mr. Hume should represent this circumstance as *adding mightily* to the force of the evidence. Is then a story which is reported by a man of genius the more credible that he does not believe it? Or, Is it the more incredible that he does believe it? What would the author have said, if the Cardinal had told us, that he gave credit to the relation? Might he not, in that case, have very pertinently pleaded the great genius, and penetration, and incredulity of the relater, as *adding mightily* to the force of the evidence? On that hypothesis, he surely might, for pretty obvious reasons. Uncommon penetration qualifies a man for detecting fraud; and it requires evidence greater than ordinary to surmount incredulity. The belief therefore of such a person as the Cardinal, who had not only the means of discovering an imposture, as he was contemporary and on the spot, but the ability to discover it, as he was a man of genius, and not over-credulous; his belief, I say, would evidently have been no small presumption of the truth of the miracle. How his disbelief can be in like manner a presumption of its truth, is to me incomprehensible. 'Ay but,' rejoins the author, 'as he seems not 'to give any credit to it, he cannot be suspected of any concur-'rence, in the holy fraud.' Very well. I am satisfied that a man's TESTIMONY is the *more* to be regarded, that he is above being suspected of concurring in *any fraud*, call it holy or unholy. But I want to know why, on the very same account, his OPINION is *the less* to be regarded. For my part, I find no difficulty in believing every article of the narration for which the Cardinal gives his testimony; notwithstanding this, I may be of the same opinion with him, that the account given by the dean and canons, which is their testimony, not his, was all a fiction. But it is not with the Cardinal's *testimony* we are here concerned: About that there is no dispute. It is with his *opinion*. Are then a man's sentiments about a matter of fact, I must insist on it, the less worthy of regard, either because he is a man of genius, and not at all credulous, or because he can-

not be suspected of any concurrence in a holy fraud? Are they the more improbable on these accounts? The essayist, when he reflects, will be the last man in the world, that would assist in establishing a maxim so unfavourable, not only to candour, but even to genius and scepticism; and indeed there are few, if any, that would be greater sufferers by it than himself.

But leaving this, as one of the unfathomable depths of the essay, I proceed to the other circumstances. 'The miracle,' says the author, 'of so singular a nature, as could *scarce* admit of a counterfeit.' He did well at least to use the word *scarce*; for if every visitant was as little desirous of prying into the secret, as the Cardinal, nothing could be more easily counterfeited: 'And the witnesses very numerous, and all of 'them, *in a manner*, spectators of the fact, to which they gave 'their testimony.' By the *very numerous witnesses*, I suppose he means the whole company in town, who were appealed to. They were all, *in a manner*, spectators of the fact. What precise abatement the author intended we should make, from the sense of the word *spectators*, on account of the qualifying phrase *in a manner*, I shall not presume to determine; but shall observe, from the memoirs, that it was not so much as pretended by the canons, that any of the citizens had seen the miracle performed; it was only pretended, that they had seen the man formerly at the gate of the church, wanting a leg. Nor is it alleged that any of them was at more pains in examining the matter, either before or after the recovery of the leg, than the Cardinal was. They were therefore properly no spectators of the fact. The phrase *in a manner*, ought, I imagine, to have been placed in the end of the sentence, which would have run thus: 'To which they, *in a manner*, gave 'their testimony:' For no direct testimony was either asked of them, or given by them; their belief is inferred from their devotion.

I have been the more particular in my remarks on the circumstances of this story, not because there was need of these remarks; for, though to the essayist the relation appeared very *memorable*, to me, and, I believe, to most people, it appears *trifling*; but that the reader might have this further specimen of the author's talents in embellishing. To the above

mentioned, and all other such idle tales, this short and simple answer will, by every man of sense, be thought sufficient. *The country where the miracle is said to have been wrought, is* SPAIN; *the people who propagated the faith of it, were* THE CLERGY. What comparison, in point of credibility, can be made between miracles, which, with no visible support but their own evidence, had at once to encounter, and did in fact overcome the abhorrence of the priest, and the tyranny of the magistrate, the insolence of the learned, and the bigotry of the superstitious: What comparison, I say, can be made between such, and any prodigies said to have been performed in a country, where all the powers of the nation, secular and ecclesiastical, the literature of the schools, such as it is, and the prejudices of the people, conspire in establishing their credit; a country sunk in the most obdurate superstition that ever disgraced human nature *, a country where the awe of the inquisition is so great, that no person, whatever be his sentiments, dares mutter a syllable against any opinion that has obtained the patronage of their spiritual guides? But that I may not be accused of prepossession, or suspected of exaggerating, I shall only give the sentiments of two eminent foreigners (who were not Protestants, and may therefore be supposed the more impartial) concerning that nation, and the influence which the holy tri-

* This perhaps will appear to some to be too severe a censure on a country called Christian, and may be thought to recoil on Christianity itself. I do not think it fairly capable of such a construction. That the corruption of the best things produces the worst, has grown into a proverb; and, on the most impartial inquiry, I do not imagine it will be found, that any species of idolatry ever tended so directly to extirpate humanity, gratitude, natural affection, equity, mutual confidence, good faith, and every amiable and generous principle from the human breast, as that gross perversion of the Christian religion which is established in Spain. It might easily be shown, that the human sacrifices offered by Heathens, have not half the tendency to corrupt the heart, and consequently deserve not to be viewed with half the horror, as those celebrated among the Spaniards, with so much pomp, and barbarous festivity, at an *auto de fe*. It will not surely be affirmed, that our Saviour intended any censure on the Mosaic institution, or genuine Judaism, when he said, *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made,* YE MAKE *him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves*. Yet the words plainly imply, that even *Pagans*, by being converted to the *Judaism* that was then professed, were *made* children of hell, and consequently corrupted instead of being reformed. See Matth. xxiii. 15.

bunal has both on their character and manners. Voltaire *, speaking of the inquisition as established in Spain, says, 'Their form of proceeding is an infallible way to destroy 'whomsoever the inquisitors please. The prisoners are not 'confronted with the informers; and there is no informer who 'is not listened to. A public criminal, an infamous person, a 'child, a prostitute, are creditable accusers. Even the son 'may depose against his father; the wife against her husband. 'In fine, the prisoner is compelled to inform against himself, 'to divine, and to confess, the crime laid to his charge; of 'which often he is ignorant. This procedure, unheard-of till 'the institution of this court, makes the whole kingdom trem-'ble. Suspicion reigns in every breast. Friendship and open-'ness are at an end. The brother dreads his brother, the father 'his son. Hence taciturnity is become the characteristic of a 'nation endued with all the vivacity natural to the inhabitants 'of a warm and fruitful climate. To this tribunal we must 'likewise impute that profound ignorance of sound philosophy, 'in which Spain lies buried, whilst Germany, England, 'France, and even Italy, have discovered so many truths, and 'enlarged the sphere of our knowledge. Never is human na-'ture so debased, as when ignorance is armed with power.' 'It is necessary,' says Montesquieu †, in the humble remon-strance to the inquisitors of Spain and Portugal, 'that we ad-'vertise you of one thing; it is, that if any person, in future 'times, shall dare assert, that, in the age wherein we live, the 'Europeans were civilized, YOU will be quoted to prove that 'they were barbarians; and the idea people will form of you, 'will be such as will dishonour your age, and bring hatred on 'all your contemporaries.'

I COME now to consider the miracles said to have been performed in the church-yard of Saint Medard, at the tomb of *Abbe* Paris. On these the author has expatiated with great parade, exulting, that he has found in them, as he imagines, what, in respect of number, and nature, and evidence, may outvie the miracles of holy writ. Yet should we admit them to be

* Essai sur l'histoire générale, chap. 118.

† De l'esprit des loix, liv. 25. chap. 13.

true, how they can be considered as proofs of any doctrine, or how they can affect the evidence of the miracles recorded in scripture, it will not perhaps be easy to discover. But setting that question aside, I propose to examine their evidence; and that, not by entering into a particular inquiry concerning each separate fact mentioned in Montgeron's collection, as such an inquiry would appear, to every judicious reader, both tedious and impertinent; but by making a few general observations, founded in unquestionable fact, and mostly supported even by the authority of Montgeron, that doughty champion of the Jansenist saint *.

First, Let it be remarked, that it was often objected by the enemies of the saint, and scarcely contradicted, never confuted, by his friends, that the prostrations at his sepulchre *produced* more diseases, than they *cured*. The ingenious author lately quoted, in the account he gives of the affairs of the church in the ninth century, taking occasion incidentally to mention the miracles of the *Abbe*, speaks of this circumstance, as a thing universally known, and undeniable †. 'I 'should not take notice,' says he, 'of an epidemical folly 'with which the people of Dijon were seized in 844, occasion-'ed by one Saint Benignus, who threw those into convulsions 'who prayed on his tomb; I should not, I say, mention this 'popular superstition, had it not been furiously revived in our 'days, in parallel circumstances. It seems, as if the same fol-'lies were destined to make their appearance, from time to 'time, on the theatre of the world: But good sense is also the 'same at all times; and nothing so judicious hath been said, 'concerning the modern miracles wrote on the tomb of I know 'not what deacon at Paris, as what a bishop of Lyons said, 'concerning those of Dijon. *A strange saint indeed, that 'maims those who pay their devoirs to him. I should think, 'miracles ought to be performed for the curing, and not for the 'inflicting of maladies.*'

The *second* observation is, That the instances of persons

* The character of his book is very justly and very briefly expressed in *Le siecle de Louis* XIV. in these words: 'Si ce livre subsistait un jour, et que le 'autres fussent perdus, la posterité croirait que notre siecle a été un tems de 'barbarie,' *chap.* 33.

† Essai sur l'histoire générale, chap. 21.

cured are extremely *few*, compared with the multitudes of people in distress, who night and day attended the sepulchre, imploring in vain the intercession of the saint. The crowds of sick and infirm, who flocked to the tomb for relief, were by all accounts innumerable: Whereas all the cures which the zealous and indefatigable Montgeron could procure vouchers of, amounted only to NINE *. The author therefore must be understood, as speaking with great latitude, when he says, 'There surely never was so great a number of miracles ascribed to one person, as those which were lately said to have been wrought in France, upon the tomb of *Abbe* Paris, the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the people were so long deluded †.' If *thousands* of diseased persons had applied for medicine to some ignorant quack, in the assurance of his extraordinary abilities; would it be matter of surprise to a reasonable man, that, of so many, *eight* or *nine* should be found, whose distempers had taken a favourable turn, whilst they were using his specifics, and had thereby given countenance to the delusion? I think it would be matter of surprise that there were so few.

I shall observe, *thirdly*, That *imposture* was actually detected, and proved in several instances. That the reader may be satisfied of this, I must intreat him to have recourse to the Archbishop of Sens's *Pastoral Instruction:* a book which Mr. Hume could not, with propriety, take any notice of, having positively asserted, that 'the enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the miracles were said to have been wrought, were never able distinctly to refute or detect them ‡.' This prelate, on the contrary, has not only given a distinct refutation of some of these pretended miracles, but has clearly detected the deceit and little artifices by which their credit was supported. I intend not to descend to particulars, and shall

* It must be owned that the author of the *Recueil* after-mentioned, hath presented us with a much greater number; but let it be remarked, that that author does not confine himself to the cures performed openly at the tomb of the *deacon;* he gives us also those that were wrought in the private chambers of the sick, by virtue of his relics, by images of him, or by earth brought from under his monument. Nor is the collection restricted only to the cures effected by the saint; it includes also the judgments inflicted by him.

† Page 195. ‡ Ibid.

therefore only refer the reader to the book itself, and beg that he will peruse what relates to the cases of *Jacques Laurent Menedrieux*, *Jean Nivet*, *Sieur le Douix*, *Laleu*, *Anne Coulon*, the widow *de Lorme*, as well as *Mademoiselle le Franc*, of whom the essayist has made mention in a note. In this perusal, the reader will observe the shameful prevarications of some Jansenist witnesses, for whom Mr. Hume would fain apologize, by telling us pleasantly, they were *tampered with* *. I shall only add on this head, that the detection of fraud in some instances, justly brings suspicion on all the other instances. A man whom I know to have lied to me, on several occasions, I shall suspect, on every occasion, when I have no opportunity of discovering, whether what he affirms be true or false. It is in the same way we judge of the spirit and conduct of parties, as of individuals.

I observe, *fourthly*, That all the cures recorded by Montgeron, as duly attested, were such as might have been effected by *natural* means. There are two kinds of miracles, to which Mr. Hume has alluded in a note, though he does not directly make the distinction. One is, when the event, considered by itself, is evidently *preternatural*. Of this kind are, raising the dead, walking on water, making whole the maimed; for by no natural causes can these effects be produced. The other kind is, when the event, considered by itself, is *natural*, that is, may be produced by natural causes, but is denominated miraculous, on account of the manner. That a sick person should be restored to health, is not, when considered singly, preternatural; but that health should be restored by the command of a man, undoubtedly is. Let us hear the author on this point: 'Sometimes an event may not, *in itself*, *seem* to be con-'trary to the laws of nature, and yet, if it were real, it might, 'by reason of some circumstances, be denominated a miracle; 'because, *in fact*, it is contrary to these laws. Thus if a 'person claiming a divine authority, should command a sick 'person to be well, a healthful man to fall down dead, the 'clouds to pour rain, the winds to blow, in short, should order 'many natural events, which immediately follow upon his com-'mand; these might justly be esteemed miracles, because they

* Page 197, in the note.

'are really, in this case, contrary to the laws of nature. For 'if any suspicion remain, that the event and command concur-'red by accident, there is no miracle, and no transgression of 'the laws of nature. If this suspicion be removed, there is evi-'dently a miracle, and a transgression of these laws; because 'nothing can be more contrary to nature, than that the voice 'or command of a man, should have such an influence *.' From what has been said, it appears, that these two kinds of miracles must differ considerably in respect of evidence, since the latter naturally gives room for a suspicion, which is absolutely excluded from the former. In the former, when the fact or event is proved, the miracle is unquestionable. In the latter, the fact may be proved, and yet the miracle may be justly questioned. It therefore merits our attention, that all the miracles recorded in Montgeron's collection, were of the second kind. One of the most considerable of these cures, was that of Don Alphonso de Palacios, who had lost one eye, and was distressed with an inflammation in the other. The inflamed eye was cured, but the lost eye was not restored. Had there been a reproduction of the member which had perished, a sufficient proof of the fact would have been a sufficient proof of the miracle. But as the case was otherwise, the fact vouched may be admitted, without admitting any miracle. The cures said to have been performed on those patients who were afflicted with paralytic or dropsical disorders, or that performed on Louisa Coirin, who had a tumour on her breast, will not appear to be entitled to a rank in the first class. As little can the cure of Peter Gautier claim that honour. One of his eyes had been pricked with an awl; in consequence of which the aqueous humour dropped out, and he became blind of that eye. His sight was restored, whilst he paid his addresses to the *Abbe*. But that a puncture in the cornea of the eye will often heal of itself, and that the aqueous humour, after it has been quite lost, will be recruited, and consequently, that the faculty of vision will, in such a case, be recovered, is what every occulist can assure us of. The loss of the watery humour, is the constant effect of a very common operation in surgery, couching the cataract. Hence we may learn, how we ought to understand these words of the

* Page 181, in the note.

author, 'The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, 'and sight to the blind, were every where talked of, as the 'usual effects of that holy sepulchre *.' As therefore the alleged miracles were all of the second class, it is only from the attendant circumstances we can judge, whether the facts, though acknowledged, were miraculous or not.

In order to enlighten us on this point, I observe, *fifthly*, That *none* of the cures were *instantaneous*. We have not indeed the same hold of the deceased *Abbe*, as of a living prophet, who pretends to work miracles. Those who attend the latter, can know exactly, to whom he grants the benefit of his miraculous aid. They can judge also, whether the supplicant's recovery be coincident with the prophet's volition or command. In the former case, we cannot judge of either; and consequently, there is much greater scope for fancy and credulity to operate. No voice was ever said to have proceeded from the tomb of the blessed deacon, as his votaries styled him. They obtained no audible answer to their prayers. There are however some circumstances, by which a probable conjecture may be made concerning the efficiency of the saint in the cures ascribed to him. One is, if the cure instantaneously followed the first devotions at the tomb. Supernatural cures differ in this particular, as much as in any other, from those which are effected by natural means, that they are not *gradually*, but *instantly*, perfected. Now of which kind were the cures of St. Medard? From the accounts that are given, it is evident, that they were *gradual*. That some of them were *sudden* is alleged; but that any of them were *instantaneous*, or immediately followed the first application, is not even pretended. All the worshippers at the tomb, persisted for *days*, several of them for *weeks*, and some for *months*, successively, daily imploring the intercession of the *Abbe*, before they received relief from their complaints; and the relief which was received, is, in most cases, acknowledged to have been gradual.

I observe, *sixthly*, That most of the devotees either had been using *medicines* before, and continued to use them, during their applications to the saint; or, that their distempers had *abated*, before they determined to solicit his help. That the Spanish

* Page 195.

youth had been using, all the while, a medicine prescribed by an eminent occulist, was proved by the depositions of witnesses; that Gautier had begun to recover his sight before he had recourse to the sepulchre, was attested, not only by his uncle, but even by himself, when, as the Archbishop of Sens informs us, he signed a recantation of what he had formerly advanced. With regard to the rest, it appears at least probable, from the circumstances of the proof, that they were using the prescriptions of the physicians, whom they had consulted before they applied to the deacon, and who were afterwards required to give their testimony, concerning the nature and malignancy of the different diseases.

The *seventh* observation is, That some of the cures attested were *incomplete.* This was manifestly the case of the Spaniard, who was relieved only from the most inconsiderable part of his complaint. Even the cure of *Mademoiselle* Thibault, which was as great a subject of exultation to the partisans of the *Abbe* as any other, was not complete. Not only was she confined to her bed, for many days, after the decrease of her dropsy; but she still remained incapable of moving two of her fingers. Silva, physician to the Duke of Orleans, attested this; adding expressly, that he *could not look on her as being cured.*

The *eight* and last observation I shall make on this subject is, that the relief granted some of them was but *temporary.* This was clearly proved to be the case of the Spanish gentleman. That soon after his return home, he relapsed into his former malady, the prelate I have often quoted, has, by the certificates and letters which he procured from Madrid, put beyond controversy. Among these, there are letters from a Spanish grandee, Don Francis Xavier, and from the patient's uncle, beside a certificate signed by himself.

After the above observations, I believe, there will be no occasion for saying much on this subject. The author has, in a note, artfully enough pointed out his aim, that it might not be overlooked by the careless reader *. 'There is another book,' says he, 'in three volumes, (called, *Recueil des miracles de l'Abbe Paris*) giving an account of many of these miracles, and 'accompanied with prefatory discourses, which are very well

* Page 196.

'wrote *.' He adds, 'There runs, however, through the 'whole of these, a ridiculous comparison betwixt the miracles

* I am surprised that Mr. Hume has taken no notice of the profound erudition displayed in the *Recueil*, as I imagine its author is much more eminent for this, than for his talent in writing. Besides, his learning deserves our regard the more, that it is of a kind rarely to be met with in the present century. Where shall we find in these dregs of the ages, to adopt his own emphatical expression, such an extensive knowledge, as he has exhibited, of all the monkish and legendary writings of the darkest and most barbarous, or, according to him, the most devout ages of the church? Or whence else, but from those productions, could he have selected such admirable materials for his work? The lives and writings of the saints are an inexhaustible treasure for performances of this kind. It is true, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, have said little to his purpose, and he makes as little use of them. But is not this want richly supplied in St. Cudbert, St. Edildride, St. Willibrord, St. Baudri, and five hundred others of an equal note? One thing however I would gladly be informed of, being utterly at a loss to account for it; What intitled this author, who seems not to be deficient in a veneration truly catholic for ignorance, superstition, and barbarism, to speak contemptibly of Capgravius, Colganus, and Jacobus de Voragine, author of *The golden legend?* To be plain with him, this is a freedom which does not at all become him: for of *the few* readers in this age, who happen to be acquainted with the authorities quoted in the *Recueil*, most, if not all, will, I am afraid, be of opinion, that the writers last mentioned are fully as credible, not less famous, and much more ingenious, than many of those to whom he is so greatly indebted for his most extraordinary narrative. Was it for him then to scandalize *these few?* It is pity that a writer of such uncommon reading and application, should act so inconsistently, and undermine his own cause. But passing his literature, which is unquestionable, I shall give the reader a specimen of his talent in disputation. To the objection that had been made, that the miracles of the deacon were gradual, he replies, 'So was 'the creation, the first of miracles, which employed no less than six days.' As all that was done in that time, is comprehended under *one name*, THE CREATION, he concludes very sagely, that it ought to be denominated *one miracle*. A writer of this stamp would no doubt despise the answer which an ordinary reader might make him,—*first*, That every single production was a perfect miracle, —*secondly*, That nothing could be more instantaneous than those productions, *God said, Let there be light, and there was light, &c.*—and, *lastly*, That the world was not created by the ministration of man, nor in the presence of men, nor in order to serve as evidence of any doctrine. I must be forgiven to remark, that in the whole of this author's reply, he has unfortunately mistaken the meaning of the objectors, who intend not to say, that God may not perform a miracle gradually, but that what is so performed, has not the same evidence of its being miraculous, as what is done in an instant, and therefore cannot so well serve as evidence of any doctrine. Now that the miracles of Monsieur de Paris were intended as evidence of his doctrine, and consequently of that of the appellants from the bull *Unigenitus*, he every where

'of our Saviour and those of the *Abbe*; wherein it is asserted, 'that the evidence for the latter is equal to that for the former *.' At first reading, one is apt, with surprise, to imagine,

vehemently maintains. Another specimen of this author's acuteness and ingenuity I shall give in a literal translation from his own words. 'But, it will 'be said, in the earliest times of the church, miraculous cures were commonly 'perfected in an instant. True; and it is this which confirms my doctrine. 'As it was ordinary then, to convert great sinners all of a sudden, it was also 'ordinary to cure the sick all of a sudden. But such wonders in both kinds 'are for the commencement of the church, or for the renovation promised her. 'In these days, which the French clergy have justly styled *the dregs of the ages*, 'it is much that God convert many sinners, and cure many sick, by slow de-'grees, at the same time that he shows by some more shining examples, that his 'arm is not shortened.'

* I am sorry to be again so soon laid under the necessity of observing, that the essayist, by confiding too much in his memory, often injures the writers whom he quotes. It is but doing justice to the author of the *Recueil*, to observe, that he has, in no part of his performance, asserted that the evidence for the miracles of Monsieur de Paris is equal to that for the miracles of Jesus Christ. Perhaps my reader will be surprised when I tell him, for I own I was exceedingly surprised when I discovered, that he has not only in the plainest terms asserted, but strenuously maintained, the contrary. And for this purpose he has employed no less than twelve pages of his work. He introduces the subject (Discourse 2. Part 1.) with observing, that he and the rest of his party had been traduced by their adversaries, as equalling the miracles of the Deacon to those of our Saviour. The impiety of such a comparison he even mentions with horror, and treats the charge as an absolute calumny. Hence he takes occasion to enumerate those peculiar circumstances in the miracles of our Lord, which gave them an eminent superiority, not only over those of his saint, but over those of every other saint, or prophet, whatsoever. To this enumeration he subjoins, Tous ceux qui recourent à Monsieur de Paris ne sont pas guéris nous dit-on; plusieurs ne le sont qu'en partie, ou d'une maniere lente, et moins éclatante; il n'a point ressuscite de morts. Que s'ensuit-il de-la, sinon que les miracles que Dieu a opérés par lui sont inférieurs à ceux que nôtre Seigneur a opérés par lui-même? Nous l'avouons, nous inculquons cette vérité. 'All 'these, we are told, who recur to Monsieur de Paris are not cured; several 'are cured but in part, or in a slow and less striking manner; he has raised no 'dead.' What follows, unless that the miracles which God wrought by him, 'are inferior to those which our Lord wrought by himself? We acknowledge, 'we inculcate this truth.' Afterwards, speaking of evidence, he owns also, that the miracles of the Deacon are not equally certain with those of Jesus Christ. The latter, he says, are more certain in many respects. He specifies the natural notoriety of some of the facts, the public and instantaneous manner in which most of them were effected, the number, the quality, the constancy of the witnesses, and the forced acknowledgment of his most spiteful enemies. He concludes this subject in these memorable terms. Au reste ce que je viens d'ex-

that the author is going to make some atonement for the tenets of the essay, by turning advocate for the miracles of Jesus Christ; and by showing, that these are not affected by his doctrine. But on this point we are not long held in suspense. He subjoins, 'As, if the testimony of men could ever be put 'in a balance with that of God himself, who conducted the pen 'of the inspired writers.' An ingenious piece of raillery without question. Is it possible, in a politer manner, or in more obliging terms, to tell the Christian world, *they are Fools*; and that all who are silly enough to believe the miracles recorded in Scripture, are not intitled to be argued with as *men*. How? They are so absurd as to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, on the evidence of the miracles wrought by our Lord and his apostles; and that these miracles were wrought, they could not believe on any testimony, less than that of God, reporting them in the Scriptures; and thus, by making inspiration and miracles reciprocally foundations to each other, they, in effect, admit both without any foundation at all. After this

poser sur la supérioritié des merveilles opérés par le Sauveur, je l'avois reconnu avec plasir dans le premier discours. J'y ai dit en propres termes, qu'il y avoit *une difference infinie entre les miracles de Jesus Christ et ceux de Monsieur de Paris*. J'ai promis de ne Jamais oublier cette difference, et j'ai tenu parole. J'ai remarqué, dans le où il convenoit de le faire, que cette difference infinie regardoit *l'evidence* des prodigies aussi bien que leur *grandeur*; et que les incredules pouvoint nous dire, que ceux que nous produsions n'ont point le même éclat qu'ont ceux de nôtre Seigneur. 'Finally, what I have just now evinced 'on the superiority of the wonders performed by our Lord, I had acknow-'ledged with pleasure in the first discourse. I said there in express terms, 'that there was *an infinite difference between the miracles of Jesus Christ and those 'of Monsieur de Paris*. I promised never to forget this difference, and I have 'kept my promise. I remarked in its proper place, that this infinite difference 'regarded the *evidence* as well as the *greatness* of the prodigies; and that the in-'credulous might object that those which we produce have not the same lustre 'with those of our Saviour.' I have been the more particular on this point, not so much to vindicate the author of the *Recueil*, as to show the sense which even the most bigotted partizan of the holy Deacon had, of the difference between the miracles ascribed to him, and those performed by our Lord. I cannot avoid remarking also another difference; I mean that which appears between the sentiments of this author as expressed by himself, and his sentiments as reported by the essayist. It is indeed, Mr. Hume, a judicious observation you have given us; that we ought to 'lend a very academic faith to 'every report which favours the passion of the reporter; in whatever way it 'strikes in with his natural inclinations and propensities.' Page 200.

handsome compliment to the friends of holy writ, he thinks himself at liberty to be very explicit on the comparative evidence of the miracles of the *Abbe*, and those of Jesus: 'If 'these writers indeed were to be considered merely as human 'testimony, the French author is *very moderate* in his compa-'rison; since he might, *with some appearance of reason*, pre-'tend, that the Jansenist miracles *much surpass* the other, in 'evidence and authority.' Was ever so rough an assault preceded by so smooth, but so insidious a preamble? Is it then still the fate of Jesus to be betrayed with a kiss? But notwithstanding this author's declaration, no Christian will have reason to dread the issue of the comparison. Mr. Hume has not entered on particulars, neither shall I enter on them. I should not incline to tire my reader with repetitions, which, in a minute inquiry, would be inevitable, I shall, therefore, only desire him, if he think it needful, to peruse a second time the eight foregoing observations. Let him try the miracles of our Lord by this touch-stone; and I persuade myself, he will be satisfied, that there is *no appearance of reason* to pretend, that the Jansenist miracles *much surpass* the other, or even equal them, in evidence and authority.

The author triumphs not a little in the observation, that the reports of the prodigies performed by the Deacon, were violently opposed by the civil magistrate, and by the Jesuits, the most learned society in the kingdom. He could see the importance of this circumstance in the case of *Abbe* Paris, though not in the case of Jesus Christ. But that the difference of the cases, as well as their resemblance, may better appear, it ought likewise to be observed, that Jansenism, though not the *ruling* faction, was at the time the popular faction; that this popularity was not the effect of the miracles of the *Abbe*, but antecedent to these miracles; that, on the contrary, the Jesuits were extremely *unpopular*; and that many, who had no more faith in the miracles of Saint Medard than Mr. Hume has, were well pleased to connive at a delusion, which at once plagued and mortified a body of men, that were become almost universally odious.

I shall only add, that nothing could more effectually expose the folly of these pretensions, than the expedient by which they

were made to cease. In consequence of an order from the King, the sepulchre was inclosed with a wall, and the votaries were debarred from approaching the tomb. The author says in relation to this *, 'No Jansenist was ever embarrassed to ac-'count for the cessation of the miracles, when the church-yard 'was shut up by the King's edict. Certain it is, that God is 'master of his own graces and works.' But it is equally certain, that neither reason nor the gospel leads us to think, that any human expedient will prove successful, which is calculated to frustrate the decrees of Heaven. Both, on the contrary, teach us, that men never more directly *promote* the designs of their maker, than when they intend directly to *oppose* them. It was not thus, that either Pharisees or Sadducees, Jews or Gentiles, succeeded in their opposition to the miracles of Jesus and his apostles. The opinion of Gamaliel † was undoubtedly judicious: *If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye* CANNOT *overthrow it; beware, therefore, lest ye be found fighting even against God.* To conclude, Did the Jansenist cause derive any advantage from those pretended miracles? None at all. It even suffered by them. It is justly remarked by Voltaire ‡, that 'the tomb of the 'Deacon Paris, proved in effect, in the minds of all people of 'sense, the tomb of Jansenism.' How unlike in all respects the miracles recorded by the Evangelists!

THUS I have briefly inquired into the nature and evidence, first of the *Pagan*, and next of the *Popish* miracles, mentioned by Mr. Hume; and have, I hope, sufficiently evinced, that the miracles of the New Testament can suffer nothing by the comparison; that, on the contrary, as, in painting, the shades serve to heighten the glow of the colours; and, in music, the discords to set off the sweetness of the harmony; so the value of these genuine miracles is enhanced by the contrast of those paltry counterfeits.

* Page 108, in the note. † Acts v. 38, 39.

‡ Siecle de Louis XIV. chap. 33.

SECTION VI.

Abstracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been miracles in former times; or such events as, when compared with the present constitution of the world, would by Mr. Hume be denominated miraculous.

I READILY concur with Mr. Hume in maintaining, that when, merely by the force of REASON, we attempt to investigate the *origin of worlds* *, we get beyond our sphere, and most infallibly bewilder ourselves in hypothesis and conjecture. REASON indeed (which vainly boasts her all-sufficiency) has sometimes pretended to carry men to this amazing height. But there is ground to suspect, that, in such instances, the ascent of *reason*, as the author elegantly expresses it †, has been aided by the wings of *imagination*. If we will not be indebted to REVELATION, for our knowledge of this article, we must, for ought I can perceive, be satisfied to live in ignorance. There is, however, one question distinct from the former, though akin to it, which, even from the principles of reason, we may with great probability determine. The question I mean is, Whether the world had an origin or not?

That there has been an infinite, eternal, and independent series of finite, successive, and dependent beings, such as men, and consequently that the world had no beginning, appears, from the bare consideration of the thing, extremely incredible, if not altogether absurd. The abstract argument used on this head, might appear too metaphysical and refined: I shall not therefore introduce it; but shall recur to topics, which are more familiar, and which, though they do not demonstrate, that it is absolutely impossible that *the world has existed from eternity*, clearly evince, that it is highly improbable, or rather, certainly false. These topics I shall only men-

* Essay 12. Of the academical or sceptical philosophy, Part 3.

† Essay 11. Of a particular providence and future state.

tion, as they are pretty obvious, and have been often urged with great energy by the learned, both ancient and modern. Such are the late invention of letters, and of all the sciences and arts by which human life is civilized; the known origin of most nations, states and kingdoms; and the first peopling of many countries. It is in our power at present to trace the history of every people backwards to times of the greatest barbarity and ignorance. Europe, though not the largest of the four parts into which the earth is divided, is, on many accounts, the most considerable. But what a different face does Europe wear at present, from what it wore three thousand years ago? How immense the odds in knowledge, in arts, in policy, in every thing? How easy is the intercourse, and how extensive the acquaintance, which men can now enjoy with all, even the remotest regions of the globe, compared with what was, or could have been enjoyed, in that time of darkness and simplicity? A man differs not more from a child, than the human race now differs from the human race then. Three thousand years ago, appear indeed to mark a very distant epoch; and yet it is but as yesterday, compared with eternity. This, when duly weighed, every thinking person will acknowledge to be as strong moral evidence, as the subject can admit, (and that I imagine is very strong) that the world had a beginning.

I shall make a supposition, which will perhaps appear whimsical, but which will tend to elucidate the argument I am enforcing. In antediluvian times, when the longevity of man was such as to include some centuries, I shall suppose, that a few boys had been transported to a desert island, and there left together, just old enough to make shift to sustain themselves, as those in the golden age are fabled to have done, on acorns, and other spontaneous productions of the soil. I shall suppose, that they had lived there for some hundreds of years, had remembered nothing of their coming into the island, nor of any other person whatsoever; and that thus they had never had occasion to know, or hear, of either birth or death. I shall suppose them to enter into a serious disquisition concerning their own duration, the question having been started, Whether they had existed from eternity, or had once begun to be?

They recur to memory: But memory can furnish them with nothing certain or decisive. If it must be allowed, that it contains no trace of a beginning of existence, it must also be allowed, that it reaches not beyond a few centuries at most. They observe besides, concerning this faculty, that the farther back it goes, it becomes the more indistinct, terminating at last in confusion and darkness. Some things however they distinctly recollect, and are assured of. They remember they were once of much lower stature, and of smaller size; they had less bodily strength; and all their mental faculties were weaker. They know, that, in the powers both of body and of mind, they have advanced, by imperceptible degrees, to the pitch they are now arrived at. These considerations, especially when fortified by some analogous observations they might have made on the growth of herbs, and trees, would have shown the probability to be entirely on the side of those who asserted that their existence had a beginning: And though, on account of the narrow sphere of their knowledge and experience, the argument could not have appeared to them in all its strength, we, from our larger acquaintance with nature, even abstracting from our knowledge of man in particular, must be satisfied, that it would have been strictly analogical and just. Exactly *similar*, the very *same*, I should rather say, is the argument I have been urging for the origination of the species. Make but a few alterations in phraseology; for *memory* substitute *history and tradition*; for *hundreds* of years, say *thousands*; for *the powers of body and mind*, put *the arts and sciences*; and, with these, and perhaps one or two more such variations, you will find the argument as applicable in the one case, as in the other. Now, if it be granted, that the human species must have had a beginning, it will hardly be questioned, that every other animal species, or even that the universe, must have had a beginning.

But in order to prove the proposition laid down in the title of this section, it is not necessary to suppose, that the world had a beginning. Admit it had not, and observe the consequence. Thus much must be admitted also, that not barely for a *long continued*, but for an ETERNAL, succession of gener-

tions, mankind were in a state little superior to the beasts; that of a sudden, there came a most astonishing change upon the species; that they exerted talents and capacities, of which there appeared not the smallest vestige, during the eternity preceding; that they acquired such knowledge as procured them a kind of empire, not only over the vegetable and animal worlds, but even, in some respect, over the elements, and all the unwieldy powers of matter; that, in consequence of this, they were quickly raised, much more above the state they had been formerly and eternally in, than such their former and eternal state was above that of the brute creation. If such a revolution in nature, such a thorough, general, and sudden change as this, would not be denominated miraculous, it is not in my power to conceive what would. I could not esteem it a greater miracle, hardly so great, that any species of beasts which have hitherto been doomed to tread the earth, should now get wings, and float about in the air.

Nor will this plea be subverted by that trite objection, That mankind may have been as much enlightened, perhaps myriads of years ago, as they are at present; but that by some *universal* calamity, such as deluge or conflagration, which, after the rotation of many centuries, the earth possibly becomes liable to, all traces of erudition and of science, all traces both of the elegant and of the useful arts, may have been effaced, and the human race, springing from a few who had escaped the common ruin, may have emerged anew, out of barbarity and ignorance. This hypothesis does but substitute one miracle for another. Such general disorder is entirely unconformable to our experience of the course of nature. Accordingly the destruction of the world by a deluge, the author has numbered among those prodigies, or miracles, which render the Pentateuch perfectly incredible.

If, on the contrary, we admit, that the world had a beginning, (and will not every thinking person acknowledge, that this position is much more probable than the contrary?) the production of the world must be ascribed either to *chance*, or to *intelligence*.

SHALL we derive all things, spiritual and corporeal, from a principle so insignificant as blind *chance?* Shall we say, with Epicurus, that the fortuitous concourse of rambling atoms has reared this beautiful and stupendous fabric? In that case, perhaps, we should give an account of the origin of things, which, most people will think, could not properly be styled miraculous. But is it, because the formation of a grand and regular system in this way, is conformable to the experienced order of nature? Quite the reverse. Nothing can be more repugnant to universal experience, than that the least organic body, not to mention the glorious frame of nature, should be produced by such a casual jumble. It has therefore, in the highest degree possible, that particular quality of miracles, from which, according to the author's theory, their incredibility results, and may doubtless, in this loose acceptation of the word, be termed *miraculous.* But should we affirm, that, to account thus for the origin of the universe, is to account for it by miracle; we should be thought, I am afraid, to speak both weakly and improperly. There is something here, if I may so express myself, which is far beyond the miraculous; something for which I know not whether any language can afford a proper appellation unless it be the general appellations of *absurdity* and *nonsense.*

SHALL we then at last recur to the common doctrine, that the world was produced by an *intelligent cause?* On this supposition also, though incomparably the most rational, it is evident, that in the creation, formation, or first production of things, call it by what name you please, a power must have been exerted, which, in respect of the present course of nature, may be styled *miraculous.* I intend not to dispute about a word, nor to inquire, whether that term can, in strict propriety, be used of any exertions before the establishment of the laws of nature. I use the word in the same latitude in which the author commonly uses it in his reasoning, for every event, that is not conformable to that course of nature with which we are acquainted by experience.

WHETHER, therefore, the world *had,* or *had not a beginning;* whether, on the *first* supposition, the production of

things be ascribed to *chance*, or to *design*; whether, on the *second*, in order to solve the numberless objections that arise, we *do*, or *do not*, recur to universal *catastrophes*? there is no possibility of accounting for the phenomena which at present come under our notice, without having at last recourse to MIRACLES; that is, to events altogether unconformable, or, if you will, contrary to the present course of nature known to us by experience. I cannot conceive an hypothesis, which is not reducible to one or other of those above mentioned. Whoever imagines, that another might be framed, which is not comprehended in any of those, and which has not as yet been advanced by any system-builder; let him make the experiment, and I will venture to prognosticate, that he will still find himself clogged with the same difficulty. The conclusion therefore above deduced, may be justly deemed, till the contrary is shown, to be not only the result of one, but alike of every hypothesis, of which the subject is susceptible.

THUS it has been evinced, as was proposed, that, abstracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence that there have been, that there must have been, *miracles* in former times, or such events, as, when compared with the present constitution of the world, would by Mr. Hume be denominated miraculous.

SECTION VII.

Revisal of Mr. Hume's Examination of the Pentateuch.

ALLOWING to the conclusion deduced in the foregoing section its proper weight, I shall also take into consideration the *Pentateuch*, or five books of Moses; or rather I shall endeavour impartially to revise the examination which those books have already undergone by the essayist *. It is, in this case, of the greatest importance to know, whether the evidence on both sides has been fairly stated.

* Page 205.

'HERE then we are first to consider a book,' which is acknowledged, on all hands, to be the most ancient record in the world, 'presented to us,' we admit, 'by a barbarous and ignor-'ant people *,' at the same time exhibiting a system of *Theism*, or natural religion, which is both rational and sublime; with which nothing that was ever compiled or produced, on this subject, in the most enlightened ages, by the most learned and polished nations, who were unacquainted with that book, will bear to be compared.

MR. Hume himself must allow, that this remark deserves attention, since his reasoning in another performance, which he calls, *The natural history of religion*, would lead us to expect the contrary. He there maintains that *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* are, and must be the religion of rude and barbarous, and consequently of ancient ages; that the true principles of *Theism*, or the belief of one almighty and wise being, the creator, the preserver, and the ruler of heaven and earth, results from the greatest improvements of the understanding in philosophy and science. To suppose the contrary, says he, is supposing, that 'while men were ignorant and barbarous, they 'discovered truth; but fell into error, as soon as they acquired 'learning and politeness †.' This reasoning is just, wherever religion is to be considered as the result of human reflections. What account then will the author give of this wonderful exception? That the reverse is here the case, it is impossible for him to dissemble. The people he himself calls ignorant and barbarous; yet they are not idolaters or polytheists. At the time when the book, which he examines, was composed, he seems to think, they even exceeded themselves in barbarity; yet the sentiments of these barbarians, on the subject of religion, the sentiments which that very book presents to us, may

* The author adds, 'wrote in an age, when they were still more barbarous.' These words I have omitted in the revisal, because they appear to me unintelligible. The age in which the Pentateuch was written, is indirectly compared to another age, he says not what: and all we can make of it is, that this people were more barbarous at that time, than at some other time, nobody knows when.

† Natural history of religion, I.

well put to silence the wisdom of the politest nations on the earth. Need I remind Mr. Hume of his express declaration, that if a traveller were transported into any unknown region, and found the inhabitants 'ignorant and barbarous, he might 'before-hand declare them idolaters, and there is *scarce* a POS-'SIBILITY of his being mistaken *?' I know no satisfactory account that can be given of this exception, on the principles of the essayist. Nevertheless, nothing is more easy than to give a satisfactory account of it, on the Christian principles. This account is that which is given by the book itself. It is, that the religious tenets of that nation were not the result of their reasonings, but proceeded from divine revelation. The contrast we discern betwixt the ISRAELITES and the ancient GREEKS and ROMANS, is remarkable. The GREEKS and ROMANS on all the subjects of human erudition, on all the liberal and the useful arts, reasoned like *men*; on the subject of religion, they prated like *children*. The ISRAELITES, on the contrary, in all the sciences and arts, were *children*; but, in their notions of religion, they were *men*, in the doctrines, for example, of the unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniscience, the omnipresence, the wisdom, and the goodness of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and the creation, preservation and government of the world; opinions so exalted and comprehensive, as, even by the author's acknowledgment, could never enter into the thoughts of barbarians.

BUT to proceed in the revisal: We have here a book, says the essayist, 'wrote in all probability long after the facts it re-'lates.' That this book was written long after *some* of the facts it relates, is not indeed denied; that it was written long after *all*, or even *most* of those facts, I see no reason to believe. If Mr. Hume meant to signify, by the expression quoted, that this was in all probability the case, why did he not produce the grounds on which the probability is founded? Shall a bold assertion pass for argument? or can it be expected, that any one should consider reasons, which are only in general supposed, but not specified?

* Natural history of religion, I.

He adds, 'corroborated by no *concurring* testimony;' as little, say I, invalidated by any *contradicting* testimony; and both, for this plain reason, because there is no human composition, that can be compared with this, in respect of antiquity. But though this book is not corroborated by the concurrent testimony of any coeval histories, because, if there ever were such histories, they are not now extant; it is not therefore destitute of all collateral evidence. The following examples of this kind of evidence deserve some notice. The division of time into weeks, which has obtained in many countries, for instance among the Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, and northern barbarians; nations whereof some had little or no intercourse with others, and were not even known by name to the Hebrews*: the tradition which in several places prevailed concerning the primeval chaos from which the world arose, the production of all living creatures out of water and earth, by the efficiency of a supreme mind †, the formation of man last of all,

* The judicious reader will observe, that there is a great difference between the concurrence of nations, in the division of time into *weeks*, and their concurrence in the other periodical divisions, into *years*, *months*, and *days*. These divisions arise from such natural causes, as are every where obvious; the annual and diurnal revolutions of the sun, and the revolution of the moon. The division into *weeks*, on the contrary, seems perfectly arbitrary: consequently its prevailing in distant countries, among nations which had no communication with one another, affords a strong presumption, that it must have been derived from some tradition (as that of the creation) which has been older than the dispersion of mankind into different regions. It is easy to conceive, that the practice, in rude and barbarous ages, might remain, through habit, when the tradition, on which it was founded, was entirely lost; it is easy to conceive, that afterwards, people addicted to idolatry, or who, like the Egyptians, had become proficients in astronomy, should assign to the different days of the week, the names of their deities or of their planets.

† This in particular merits our attention the more, that it cannot, by any explication, be made to agree with the doctrine which obtained among the Pagans, commonly called *the mythology*. Ovid is so sensible of this, that, when he mentions a deity as the efficient cause of the creation, he leaves him, as it were, detached from those of the popular system, which it was his business as a poet to deliver, being at a loss what name to give him, or what place in nature to assign him. Quisquis fuit ille deorum. *Whichever of the gods it was.* He well knew that, in all the catalogue of their divinities, the god who made the world was not to be found, that these divinities themselves were, on the contrary, produced out of the chaos, as well as men and beasts. Mr. Hume, in his *Natural history of religion*, IV. remarks this conduct in Ovid, and ascribes it

in the image of God, and his being vested with dominion over the other animals, the primitive state of innocence and happi-

to his having lived in a learned age, and having been instructed by philosophers in the principle of a divine formation of the world. For my part, I very much question, whether any nation was ever yet indebted, for this principle, to the disquisitions of philosophers. Had this opinion never been heard of, till the Augustan age, it might indeed have been suspected, that it was the daughter of philosophy and science, but so far is this from being the case, that some vestiges of it may be traced even in the earliest, and most ignorant times. Thales the Milesian, who lived many centuries before Ovid, had, as Cicero, in his first book *De natura deorum* informs us, attributed the origin of all things to God. Anaxagoras had also denominated the forming principle, which severed the elements, created the world, and brought order out of confusion, *intelligence*, or *mind*. It is therefore much more probable that these ancients owed this doctrine to a tradition handed down from the earliest ages which even all the absurdities of the theology they had embraced had not been able totally to erase, though these absurdities could never be made to coalesce with this doctrine. At the same time I acknowledge, that there is something so noble and so rational in the principle, *That the world was produced by an intelligent cause*, that sound philosophy will ever be ready to adopt it, when once it is proposed. But that this opinion is not the offspring of philosophy, may be reasonably deduced from this consideration also, that they were not the most enlightened or philosophic nations, amongst whom it was maintained in greatest purity. I speak not of the Hebrews. Even the Parthians, Medes, and Persians, whom the Greeks considered as barbarians, were genuine theists; and, notwithstanding many superstitious practices which prevailed among them, they held the belief of one eternal God, the Creator and the Lord of the universe. If this principle is to be derived from the utmost improvement of the mind in ratiocination and science, which is Mr. Hume's hypothesis, the phenomenon just now observed is unaccountable. If, on the contrary, it is to be derived originally from revelation, preserved by tradition, through successive generations, nothing can more easily be accounted for. Traditions are always longest retained, and most purely transmitted, in or near the place where they were first received, and amongst a people who possess strong attachment to their ancient laws and customs. Migrations into distant countries, mixture of different nations, revolutions in government and manners, yea and ingenuity itself, all contribute to corrupt tradition, and do sometimes wholly efface it. This I take to be the only admissible account, why so rational and so philosophical a principle prevailed most in ages and countries in which reason and philosophy seemed to be but in their infancy. The notion, that the Greeks borrowed their opinions on this subject from the books of Moses, a notion for which some Jewish writers, some Christian fathers, and even some moderns have warmly contended, appears void of all foundation. These opinions in Greece, as has been observed, were of a very early date; whereas that there existed such a people as the Jews seems scarcely to have been known there till about the time of the Macedonian conquests. No sooner were they known than they were hated, and their laws

ness: the subsequent degeneracy of mankind: their destruction by a flood: and the preservation of one family in a vessel. Nay, which is still stronger, I might plead the vestiges of some such catastrophe as the deluge, which the shells and other marine bodies, that are daily dug out of the bowels of the earth, in places remote from the sea, do clearly exhibit to us: I might urge the traces, which still remain in ancient histories, of the migration of people and of science from Asia (which has not improperly been styled *the cradle of the arts*) into many parts both of Africa and Europe: I might plead the coincidence of those migrations, and of the origin of states and kingdoms, with the time of the dispersion of the posterity of Noah.

But to return: The author subjoins, 'resembling those fa-'bulous accounts, which every nation gives of its origin.' It is unluckily the fate of holy writ with this author, that both its resemblance, and its want of resemblance, to the accounts of other authors, are alike presumptions against it. He has not indeed told us, wherein it resembles fabulous accounts: and, for my part, though the charge were just, I should imagine, little or nothing to the disadvantage of the Pentateuch could be deduced from it. It is universally agreed among the learned, that even the most absurd fables of idolaters derive their origin from facts, which having been, in barbarous ages, transmitted only by oral tradition, have come at length to be grossly corrupted and disfigured. It is nevertheless probable, that such fictions would still retain some striking features of those truths, from which they sprang. And if the books of Moses resemble, in any thing, the fabulous accounts of other nations, it would not perhaps be difficult to prove, that they resemble only whatever is least fabulous in these accounts. That this will be found to be the case, we may reasonably presume, even from what has been observed already; and if so, the resemblance, so far from being an argument against those books, is evidently an argument in their favour. In order to remove any doubt that may remain on this head, it ought to be attend-

and customs universally despised. Nor is there the shadow of reason to think, that the Greeks knew any thing of the sacred writings till a considerable time afterwards, when that version of them was made into their language, which is called *The translation of the seventy.*

ed to, that, in a number of concurrent testimonies, (where there could have been no previous concert) there is a probability independent of that which results from our faith in the witnesses; nay, should the witnesses be of such a character as to merit no faith at all. This probability arises from the *concurrence* itself. That such a concurrence should spring from *chance*, is as one to infinite, in other words, morally impossible; if therefore concert be excluded, there remains no other cause but the reality of the fact.

It is true, that 'upon reading this book, we find it full of 'prodigies and miracles:' but it is also true, that many of those miracles are such, as the subject it treats of must unavoidably make us expect. For a proof of this position, I need but refer the reader to the principles established in the preceding section. No book in the world do we find written in a more simple style; nowhere does there appear in it, the least affectation of ornament; yet nowhere else is the Almighty represented, as either acting or speaking in a manner so becoming the eternal ruler of the world. Compare the account of the CREATION which is given by *Moses*, with the ravings of Sanchoniatho the *Phenician* philosopher, which he has dignified with the title of COSMOGONY; or compare it with the childish extravagancies of the *Greek* and the *Latin* poets, so justly likened by the author to *a sick man's dreams* *; and then say, whether any person of candour and discernment will not be disposed to exclaim, in the words of the prophet, *What is the* CHAFF *to the* WHEAT †! The account is what we should call, in reference to our experience, *miraculous*. But was it possible it should be otherwise? I believe the greatest infidel will not deny, that it is at least as plausible an opinion, that the world had a beginning, as that it had not. If it had, can it be imagined by any man in his senses, that that particular quality should be an objection to the narrative, which he previously knows it must have? Must not the first production of things, the original formation of animals and vegetables, require exertions of power, which, in preservation and propagation, can never be exemplified?

It will perhaps be objected, That if the miracles continued

* Natural history of religion, XV. † Jer. xxiii. 28.

no longer, and extended no further, than the necessity of creation required, this reasoning would be just; but that in fact they both continued much longer, and extended much farther. The answer is obvious: It is impossible for us to judge, how far the necessity of the case required. Immediately after the creation, things must have been in a state very different from that which they are in at present. How long that state might continue, we have not the means of discovering: but as, in human infancy, it is necessary that the feeble creature should, for some time, be carried in the nurse's arms, and afterwards, by the help of leading-strings, be kept from falling, before he acquire strength to walk; it is not unlikely, that, in the infancy of the world, such interpositions should be more frequent and requisite, till nature attaining a certain maturity, those laws and that constitution should be established, which we now experience. It will greatly strengthen this conclusion, to reflect, that in every species of natural productions with which we are acquainted, we invariably observe a similar feebleness in the individuals on their appearance, and a similar gradation towards a state of greater perfection and stability. Besides, if we acknowledge the necessity of the exertion of a power, which in reference only to our experience is called miraculous; the question, as is well observed by the judicious prelate formerly quoted *, 'whether this power stopped immediately, after it had 'made man, or went on and exerted itself farther, is a question 'of the same kind, as whether an ordinary power exerted itself 'in such a particular degree and manner, or not.' It cannot therefore, if we think reasonably on this subject, greatly astonish us, that such a book should give 'an account of a state of 'the world, and of human nature, entirely different from the 'present; of our fall from that state; of the age of man extend-'ed to near a thousand years; and of the destruction of the 'world by a deluge.'

FINALLY, if, in such a book, mingled with the excellencies I have remarked, there should appear some difficulties, some things for which we are not able to account; for instance, 'the 'arbitrary choice of one people, as the favourites of heaven;

* Analogy of religion, &c. part 2. chap. 2. sect. 2.

'and their deliverance from bondage by prodigies the most as-'tonishing imaginable;' is there any thing more extraordinary here, than, in a composition of this nature, we might have previously expected to find? We must be immoderately conceited of our own understandings, if we imagine otherwise. Those favourites of Heaven, it must be likewise owned, are the countrymen of the writer; but of such a writer, as of all historians or annalists, ancient or modern, shows the least disposition to flatter his countrymen. Where, I pray, do we find him either celebrating their virtues, or palliating their vices; either extolling their genius, or magnifying their exploits? Add to all these, that, in every thing which is not expressly ascribed to the interposal of Heaven, the relation is in itself plausible, the incidents are natural, the characters and manners such as are admirably adapted to those early ages of the world. In these particulars, there is no affectation of the marvellous; there are no 'descriptions of the sea and land monsters; no relations of 'wonderful adventures, strange men, and uncouth manners *.'

When all these things are seriously attended to, I persuade myself, that no unprejudiced person will think, that the Pentateuch bears falsehood on the face of it, and deserves to be rejected without examination. On the contrary, every unprejudiced person will find (I say not, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than all the miracles it relates; this is a language which I do not understand, and which only serves to darken a plain question; but I say, he will find) very many and very strong indications of authenticity and truth; and will conclude, that all the evidences, both intrinsic and extrinsic, by which it is supported, ought to be impartially canvassed. Abundant evidence there are of both kinds; some hints of them have been given in this section; but to consider them fully, falls not within the limits of my present purpose.

* Page 185.

CONCLUSION.

WHAT is the sum of all that hath been now discussed? It is briefly this: *That the author's favourite argument, of which he boasts the discovery, is founded in error* *, *is managed with sophistry* †, *and is at last abandoned by its inventor* ‡, *as fit only for show, not for use; that he is not more successful in the collateral arguments he employs; particularly, that there is no peculiar presumption against religious miracles* ‖; *that, on the contrary, there is a peculiar presumption in their favour* §; *that the general maxim, whereby he would enable us to decide betwixt opposite miracles, when it is stript of the pompous diction, that serves it at once for decoration, and for disguise, is discovered to be no other than an identical proposition, which, as it conveys no knowledge, can be of no service to the cause of truth* ¶; *that there is no presumption, arising either from human nature* **, *or from the history of mankind* ††, *against the miracles said to have been wrought in proof of Christianity; that the evidence of these is not subverted by those miracles, which historians of other religions have recorded* ‡‡; *that neither the Pagan* ‖‖, *nor the Popish* §§ *miracles, on which he hath expatiated, will bear to be compared with those of holy writ; that, abstracting from the evidence of particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been miracles in former times* ¶¶; *and, lastly, that his examination of the Pentateuch is both partial and imperfect, and consequently stands in need of a revisal* ***.

'OUR most holy religion,' says the author in the conclusion of his essay, 'is founded on faith, not on reason; and it is a 'sure method of exposing it, to put it to such a trial, as it is by 'no means fitted to endure.' If, by *our most holy religion*, we are to understand the fundamental articles of the Christian sys-

* Part I. sect. 1. † Sect. 2. ‡ Sect. 3. ‖ Sect. 4.
§ Sect. 5. ¶ Sect. 6. ** Part II. sect. 1.
†† Sect. 2. ‡‡ Sect. 3. ‖‖ Sect. 4. §§ Sect. 5.
¶¶ Sect. 6. *** Sect. 7.

tem, these have their foundation in the nature and decrees of God; and, as they are antecedent to our faith or reasonings, they must be also independent of both. If they be true, our disbelief can never make them false; if they be false, the belief of all the world will never make them true. But as the only question between Mr. Hume and the defenders of the gospel, is, Whether there be reason to believe those articles? by *our most holy religion*, he can mean only our belief of the Christian doctrine: and concerning this belief we are told, that it is founded on *faith*, not on reason; that is, our faith is founded on our faith; in other words, it has no foundation, it is a mere chimera, the creature of a distempered brain. I say not, on the contrary, that *our most holy religion* is founded on *reason*, because this expression, in my opinion, is both ambiguous and inaccurate; but I say, that we have sufficient reason for the belief of our religion: or to express myself in the words of an apostle, that the Christian, if it is not his own fault, may *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh* him *a* REASON *of* his *hope*.

So far therefore am I from being afraid of exposing Christianity, by submitting it to the test of reason; so far am I from judging this a trial, which it is by no means fitted to endure, that I think, on the contrary, the most violent attacks that have been made upon the faith of Jesus, have been of service to it. Yes: I do not hesitate to affirm, that our religion has been indebted to the *attempts*, though not to the *intentions*, of its bitterest enemies. They have tried its strength indeed, and, by trying, they have displayed its strength; and that in so clear a light, as we could never have hoped, without such a trial, to have viewed it in. Let them therefore write, let them argue, and, when arguments fail, even let them cavil, against religion as much as they please: I should be heartily sorry, that even in this island, the asylum of liberty, where the spirit of Christianity is better understood (however defective the inhabitants are in the observance of its precepts) than in any other part of the Christian world; I should, I say, be sorry, that, in this island, so great a disservice were done to religion, as to check its adversaries, in any other way, than by returning a candid answer to their objections. I must at the same time acknow-

ledge, that I am both ashamed and grieved, when I observe any friends of religion, betray so great a diffidence in the goodness of their cause (for to this diffidence alone it can be imputed) as to show an inclination for recurring to more forcible methods. The assaults of infidels, I may venture to prophesy, will never overturn our religion. They will prove not more hurtful to the Christian system, if it be allowed *to compare small things with the greatest*, than the boisterous winds are said to prove to the sturdy oak. They shake it impetuously for a time, and loudly threaten its subversion; whilst, in effect, they only serve to make it strike its roots the deeper, and stand the firmer ever after.

ONE word more with the essayist, and I have done. 'Upon 'the whole,' says he, 'we may conclude, that the *Christian* '*religion*, not only was at first attended with miracles, but even 'at this day, cannot be believed by any reasonable person with-'out one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its 'veracity; and whoever is moved by faith to assent to it;' that is, whoever by his belief is induced to believe it, 'is conscious 'of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all 'the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determi-'nation to believe, what is most contrary to custom and experi-'ence.' An author is never so sure of writing unanswerably, as when he writes altogether unintelligibly. It is impossible that you should fight your enemy before you find him; and if he hath screened himself in darkness, it is next to impossible that you should find him. Indeed, if any meaning can be gathered from that strange assemblage of words just now quoted, it seems to be one or other of these which follow: *either*, That there are not any in the world, who believe the gospel; *or*, That there is no want of miracles in our time. How either of these remarks, if just, can contribute to the author's purpose, it will not, I suspect, be easy to discover. If the second remark be true, if there be no want of miracles at present, surely experience cannot be pleaded against the belief of miracles said to have been performed in time past. Again, if the first remark be true, if there be not any in the world who believe the gospel, because, as Mr. Hume supposes, a miracle cannot be believed without a new miracle, why all this ado to refute opi-

nions which nobody entertains? Certainly, to use his own words, 'The knights-errant, who wandered about to clear the 'world of dragons and giants, never entertained the least doubt 'concerning the existence of these monsters *.'

Might I presume faintly to copy but the manner of so inimitable an original, as the author has exhibited in his concluding words, I should also conclude upon the whole, That miracles are capable of proof from testimony, and that there is a full proof of this kind, for those said to have been wrought in support of Christianity; that whoever is moved, by Mr. Hume's ingenious argument, to assert, that no testimony can give sufficient evidence of miracles, admits for *reason*, though perhaps unconsciously, a mere *subtilty*, which subverts the evidence of testimony, of history, and even of experience itself, giving him a determination to deny, what the common sense of mankind, founded in the primary principles of the understanding, would lead him to believe.

* See the first paragraph of Essay 12. Of the academical or sceptical philosophy.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL A SPIRIT NEITHER OF SUPERSTITION NOR OF ENTHUSIASM:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

BEFORE THE SYNOD OF ABERDEEN,

APRIL 9th, 1771.

SERMON I.

2 TIM. I. 7.—*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

THERE are two ways in which we may be profitably employed, in considering at large the religious institution of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our inquiries may be directed either to the proofs by which it is supported, or to the spirit which it breathes. In the former, by the discovery of the truth of our religion, it is rendered the object of our faith; in the latter, by the contemplation of its beauty, it becomes more immediately the object of our love.

I say, more immediately; because, though this is the direct, it is not the only consequence of such a contemplation. As Christianity claims to be of heavenly extraction, it is reasonable to expect that it should bear some resemblance to the original from which it springs. The lineaments of goodness and wisdom, of majesty and grace, may be justly looked for in the offspring of the Father in heaven, who is unerringly wise, and infinitely good, the source and the standard of all excellence: And if these lineaments be discovered, they are no inconsiderable evidence of the justice of the claim. Between the child and the parent, there will sometimes be found so striking a likeness, as will be sufficient to convey to a discerning spectator, a stronger conviction of the relation subsisting between them, than could be effected by any other kind of proof. Whatever therefore tends to exhibit our religion as amiable, is, in fact, an intrinsic evidence of its truth; and consequently tends as really, though not so directly, to render it credible, as arguments deduced from prophecy or miracles. Add to this, that the attacks of infidels are as often levelled against the internal character, as against the external evidence of revelation. The

vindication of the first is therefore as necessary for subverting the cause of infidelity, as the illustration of the second.

Besides, it is not barely by being believed, (though that is a most important point,) that religion produces its effect on the mind. *The devils believe, and tremble* *. Their faith, so far from conducing to their happiness, becomes an instrument of their misery. They hate the doctrine which they cannot avoid believing. We must possess the love as well as the belief of the truth, if we would be saved by it †. For this reason it is assigned as the grand criterion of that faith which is available in God's account, that it is a *faith which worketh by love* ‡. Every other criterion is but the result of this. It is solely in consequence of this that it sanctifieth §, purifying the heart ‖, and giving the mind a victory over the world ¶.

It also merits our attention, that where love is wanting, it cannot be expected that belief should be durable. Religion is an object that can scarcely be viewed by any human creature with indifference. If it fail to kindle affection in the soul, it will not fail to awaken dread, which commonly associates with aversion. Now it is the general bent of our nature to disbelieve what we dislike. How easy is the task of the declaimer or the witling, when he is employed in decrying or ridiculing tenets which his hearers wish to be false? The apostle Paul acquaints us, that the lying wonders, and other deceitful arts to be practised by the man of sin, in seducing the disciples of Christ, would prove successful only among those who harbour not the love of the truth **.

If therefore the religion of Jesus, on such an examination of its spirit as we now propose, shall appear to be altogether lovely, we have ground to hope, that, with the blessing of God, our faith itself will be strengthened, our love, that animating principle of obedience ††, without which faith is unprofitable and dead ‡‡, will be inflamed, and our perseverance more effectually secured.

Nor will it, I hope, be thought by any that the subject is unsuitable, either to the occasion or to the audience. It would

* James ii. 19. † 2 Thess. ii. 10. ‡ Gal. v. 6.
§ John xvii. 17, 19. ‖ Acts xv. 9. ¶ 1 John v. 4.
** 2 Thess. ii. 10. †† Rom. xiii. 10. ‡‡ James ii. 14, 17.

be difficult to imagine an occasion, on which the spirit of the gospel would be an improper topic for a sermon: And as to the audience, I have too high a respect for my fathers and brethren present, not to be persuaded that they are as deeply sensible as I myself am, that we all stand in need of the same means and assistance, for producing, advancing, and securing, our faith, love, and perseverance, that even the meanest of our hearers stand in need of. And if the same helps are equally necessary to us on our own account, they are of more importance on the account of others. To us the ministry of reconciliation is intrusted *: As Christian pastors we are honoured to be the ordinary instruments of conveying the knowledge and the temper of religion to the people. That we may reflect light on others, we must ourselves be previously enlightened; that we may be fitted for infusing into the hearts of our hearers the spirit of the gospel, we need first to experience its influence on our own. In order then to prove successful helpers of the faith and joy of our fellow Christians, as by our office we are bound to be †, one useful expedient doubtless is, to prove faithful assistants and monitors to one another. The sketch that I propose to give, considering the dignity of the subject, must, I know, have many imperfections. But I will not injure my Reverend auditors by an apology; or once suppose, that what I have to offer on such a subject will not be heard with patience, and weighed with candour.

THE words of Paul to Timothy, now read in your hearing, shall serve as the foundation of this discourse: *God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* On this subject I propose, my brethren, with the assistance of Heaven, *first*, To premise a few things for ascertaining the import of the expressions used by the apostle;—*secondly*, To inquire into the spirit of false religion, as here denominated *the spirit of fear*, and as standing in opposition to the character given of the true;—*thirdly*, To inquire into the spirit of true religion, here styled *the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*; showing, as I proceed, that with the greatest justice this character is ascribed to

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. † Rom x. 17.; 2 Cor. i. 24.

the religion of Christ;—*and* to conclude with some reflections.

I. In the *first* place, I premise a few things in order to ascertain the meaning of the apostle's words, particularly of the term *spirit*, as used in my text.

It is necessary to observe, that by the *spirit* is often meant in the New Testament the Holy Ghost, the third of the sacred Three in whose name we are by baptism initiated into the Christian communion; and that when any of the disciples of Jesus are said in Scripture to receive the Spirit, it is always meant, that by the operation of that divine person on their minds, they obtain either the more ordinary graces of faith, hope, and charity, which are essential to the Christian life; or the more extraordinary, the power of working miracles, of prophecy, of speaking strange languages, and other such like? These gifts the wisdom of God thought fit to bestow in the early times of Christianity, that by means of such incontestible evidences of its divinity, its doctrine might be more quickly propagated in the world. But as they were intended solely for answering a particular and temporary purpose, they were but circumstantial and temporary. When once the end was effected, there was no further occasion for the means. Accordingly they have long since ceased in the church of Christ. Whereas the first mentioned, though more common in the dispensation, yet being of the essence of his religion, and therefore more excellent in their nature, must continue whilst he has followers on the earth.

Some have thought, that by the words of my text the apostle intended to signify the spiritual gifts last enumerated, the extraordinary and miraculous; and it must be acknowledged, that the word *power* is often employed in Scripture to denote, by way of eminence, the power of working miracles. But that this is not the meaning of the term in the passage before us, will appear from the following considerations. *First*, The original word in this verse rendered *power*, is also often used by this apostle to signify the virtues of self-government*. *Secondly*, Power is here coupled with love, and with a sound

* 1 Cor. iv. 19.; Eph. iii. 16.; Col. i. 11.

mind; two qualities which are never ranked among the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. *Thirdly*, The spirit of power stands here in opposition to the spirit of fear, which manifestly denotes an habitual disposition, or temper of soul. From all these it is abundantly evident, that, in this place, the inspired penman intended, if I may so express myself, to delineate the principal features of the Christian character. Accordingly the word *spirit* may very reasonably be understood to denote a prevailing disposition of soul. This disposition he exhibits to us as the badge of our religious profession, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; *God hath not given us*, us the believers in Jesus, distinguished alike by this faith from Jews and Gentiles, *the spirit of fear; but* he has given us the spirit *of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

The same term is frequently, in the language of holy writ, and even in common language, employed to denote both cause and effect. Thus the luminary itself, and the rays issuing from it, we indiscriminately denominate *light:* And that in Scripture-idiom the word *spirit* often signifies an habitual frame or temper is undeniable. In this way it behoves us to understand these phrases, *the spirit of meekness*, *the spirit of slumber*, *the spirit of jealousy*, and many others, which frequently occur in sacred writ. We are therefore to conceive the apostle as exhibiting here the outline of the Christian character, as describing in brief that temper of soul which the religion of Jesus is so admirably fitted to inspire into those who by faith receive it. This temper, this internal signature of genuine Christianity, I shall in the sequel, for distinction's sake, denominate *the spirit of the gospel.* It is the same which, in the New Testament, is sometimes called *the spirit of Christ*, and sometimes *the spirit of adoption*, or sonship *.

Need I add, that by such expressions are not meant either the doctrines of our religion, or its moral precepts, considered severally, its promises or its threatenings, its positive institutions, or the examples of virtue which it holds up to our imitation; but that temper of mind which is the result of these; that character which all the branches of Christianity, each in the way suited to its particular nature, conspire to produce in the soul

* Rom. viii. 9, 15.; Gal. iv. 6.

of the believer, or, which is the same thing, in that person on whom this religion has its proper influence.

So much for ascertaining the import of the words.

II. I proceed, as I proposed, in the *second* place, To inquire into the spirit of false religion, as here characterized *a spirit of fear*, and as standing in opposition to the character given of the true.

It hath been long a common artifice of atheistical and infidel authors, industriously to confound, in their writings, the words *religion* and *superstition*, as if they were synonymous. A few indeed of late, more refined in their notions on this subject than their predecessors, observing, that into the character of religionists of different denominations, there entered very different, nay contrary principles, have nicely distinguished between these two kinds of false religion, *superstition* and *enthusiasm*; which, though in some respects opposite in their nature and tendency, agree in this, that each lays claim to the appellation of religion. Hence those writers have taken occasion to consider every thing that comes under this name, as a particular mode of one or the other, or a certain combination of both.

That there is a foundation in nature for the distinction which has been made between these extremes, is not to be denied; but that religion, properly so called, though it has been often, through the ignorance and corruption of men, blended with these, is in its nature totally distinct from both, and participates of neither, I hope in the sequel fully to evince.

For this purpose I am previously to consider the spirit of false religion. Its character may be learnt from my text, both from what is directly ascribed to it, and from what is insinuated concerning it. *First*, The apostle here ascribes to it, that it enfeebles and intimidates the soul. When Paul expressed himself in this manner, *God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*, it is manifest that he meant to mark the difference, in respect of its influence on the temper, to be found in that sublime doctrine which he taught, as well from every possible species of false religion, as from the Judaism that then obtained amongst his countrymen,

and from the various forms of polytheism that prevailed in the rest of the world.

Terror then, or unaccountable and unbounded fear, is one of the commonest, and at the same time one of the ugliest features, in false religion. If I might be indulged a little in criticising on the apostle's expression, I would remark, that the original word, which in my text is rendered *fear*, occurs no where else in the New Testament *. It does not signify simply the passion of fear, or any particular exertion of that passion; but it is one of those terms that are always employed in a bad sense, and serve to denote something vicious in the mental habit, which, uncontrolled by an enlightened conscience, fosters passion into disease.

There is a fear that is reasonable and proper; there is a fear that is unreasonable and weak. None of the appetites or affections belonging to human nature are evil in themselves. A little reflection will satisfy the attentive inquirer, that they are all admirably calculated to promote the welfare, both of the individual, and of the species. But then it was the purpose of heaven, we even read it in our frame, that all the inferior powers of the soul should be informed by reason, and controlled by conscience. The evil then only takes place, when the passion, emancipating itself, and disdaining all restraint and control, is directed towards an improper object, or cherished in an undue degree. It is this which is in Scripture aptly styled *inordinate affection*. The passion of fear was implanted in our mind to rouse us on the approach of danger. The intention evidently was, that, when to avoid danger is both possible and lawful, we may be stimulated timely to avoid it; and, when otherwise, that we may be suitably prepared to encounter it. It is not in the want of fear, or a lively sense of danger, that true fortitude consists. On the contrary, were we destitute of the passion, we should be incapable of the virtue. No person would call it courage, in an infant, or a blind man, to move with unconcern on the summit of a precipice. Their unconcern would arise, not from strength of mind, or any positive quality, but from a defect, ignorance and blindness. It is not therefore in the ex-

* The word is δειλια. Its conjugates, δειλος, and δειλιαω, occur sometimes in the New Testament, but always in a bad sense.

tinction of fear that magnanimity consists. That man is, in the best sense of the word, magnanimous, in whom fear habitually waits the information of reason, and stoops to the command of duty.

Nor is fear to be excluded altogether from the precincts of religion. If the supreme Lord of the universe ought to be considered as a lawgiver, there must be danger in violating his laws. To affirm that there is none, and that the observance and the transgression are alike in their consequences, is to annihilate the very notion of a law. It is giving and refusing to God the character of Lawgiver with the same breath. A soul then conscious of the violation, and yet not susceptible of the passion, would as manifestly labour under a defect, as the blind man or infant in the case supposed. One of the greatest motives to reformation and future vigilance would in such a character be totally wanting. If a reverence for the laws of our country, and when one is tempted to trangress, a fear of incurring their sanction, be qualities essential in a good citizen, a reverence for the laws of our nature, and an awe of his sentence who is the righteous judge of the world, are no less essential in a good man. The fear of God then, thus understood and qualified, is not only irreproachable, but even incumbent on creatures so constituted and so situated as we are, conscious of sin and frailty, and daily exposed to temptation. It is with reason therefore that it is so often inculcated in sacred writ.

It is true, we are there informed, that *perfect love casteth out fear* *. But it ought to be remembered, that perfect love also casteth out sin. For *love*, we are told, *is the fulfilling of the law* †; and the whole of the divine commandments are summed up by our Saviour in the love of God, and the love of our neighbour ‡. For this reason, fear, which implies an apprehension of danger, can never be incumbent on those who, like the holy angels, are in absolute security. Hence we discover what is the great foundation of religious fear in a rational being such as man. It is the consciousness of guilt, or moral evil, by violating the law of his nature, which is the law of God. And the reason that this fear is enjoined on men as a duty is, that it may serve the upright as a guard to their integrity, and the

* 1 John iv. 18. † Rom. xiii. 10. ‡ Matth. xxii. 35, &c.

corrupt as a monitor to repentance. As from the former observation we discover the grounds of pious fear, from that now made we perceive its use and influence; and, by means of both, we are enabled to distinguish it from all superstitious terrors whatsoever, and consequently from that spirit of timidity, which, by the apostle's account, is so far from being the spirit of the gospel, that it is a perfect contrast to it.

The panics of superstition often arise unaccountably, at least from no adequate cause; and always tend to what is insignificant, if not pernicious. The cause is often inadequate. An eclipse of the sun, or an uncommon appearance in the sky, has struck whole nations with amazement and terror. From the like blind apprehensions have sprung the absurd doctrine of omens, and the illusive arts, now justly exploded, of augury, astrology, and divination. Even when there is a real cause of fear, the effect often (if any thing on so serious a subject ought to excite laughter) we should call ridiculous. A late author observes, That 'when the old Romans were attacked with a 'pestilence, they never ascribed their sufferings to their vices, 'or dreamed of repentance and amendment. They never 'thought that they were the general robbers of the world, 'whose ambition and avarice made desolate the earth, and re-'duced opulent nations to want and beggary. They only creat-'ed a dictator in order to drive a nail into a door, and by that 'means they thought that they had sufficiently appeased their 'incensed deity *.' This is in the true genius of superstition. The fears of the people are alarmed by a general calamity. At once ignorant, timid, and credulous, they will admit any thing as the cause of their suffering, and will recur to any thing as an expedient for relieving them, which the knavery or the folly of those who have their confidence shall suggest. It is so far lucky when nothing more hurtful is suggested, than the driving of a nail into a door. Sometimes this ignoble principle leads the infatuated worshippers to seek to propitiate their divinity by exercising cruelty on themselves. Thus it was the manner of Baal's prophets to cut themselves with knives and lancets †. Sometimes, which is worse, it leads them to exercise cruelty on

* Natural History of Religion, XIV. † 1 Kings xviii. 28.

others. From this baneful origin have arisen the most shocking and bloody tragedies that ever disgraced the annals of mankind. What crimes hath not superstition sanctified in the eyes of her blinded votaries! Hence human sacrifices and holy wars. Hence perfidies and massacres. Hence private assassinations and public persecutions.

It must be confessed, that it has not been amongst idolatrous nations only that this spirit has been found. We learn, from the complaints of the prophets, that it had great influence on the minds even of the chosen people. They had but too strong a propensity to imagine, that for the most atrocious crimes they could atone, by numerous and costly victims. Nor did they immolate these, agreeably to the intention of their law, as symbolical expressions of gratitude or of penitence, and as engagements to reformation; but as a proper equivalent for benefits received, and satisfaction for sins committed, and consequently as a full discharge of all the debts they owed to divine justice. For this reason the prophet Asaph introduces Jehovah expostulating with them on the grossness and absurdity of their sentiments. They acted precisely as though they could enrich with their gifts the Lord of the universe, or supply a want in him who, being all-sufficient, stands in need of nothing. *If I were hungry*, saith God, *I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats* *?* He acquaints them, on the contrary, that as long as they continued insensible and impenitent, the very oblations they offered, served but to aggravate their guilt. *To the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth*†?* In the same spirit the prophet Isaiah assures the people, that it is in vain they recur to burnt-offerings and the other solemnities of their worship, whilst avarice, injustice, oppression, inhumanity, continued to prevail among them. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord.—Who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations*‡. To show, after all, that the prophet did not mean to drive them to despondency, but to call them to repentance, he concludes, *Put away the evil of your doings;*

* Psal. l. 12, 13. † Psal. l. 16. ‡ Isa. i. 11—13.

cease to do evil, learn to do well, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow *.

I shall afterwards have occasion to observe, that many who have been more highly favoured than even Israel was, and more fully enlightened by celestial beams of divine truth, have not escaped incurring the same imputation. But alas! my brethren, it is a just, though melancholy reflection, that it is not in the conduct or the dogmas of those who call themselves Christian; or, to adopt our Saviour's phrase, who say to him, *Lord, Lord* †, that we are to look for the spirit of the gospel: but it is in what we learn from this sacred volume; it is in the lives of Christ and his apostles; it is in the doctrine they taught, the maxims they inculcated, the motives they urged, the institutions they established.

From what has been said, it follows, that there are two principal characteristics of the dread infused by superstition, that clearly distinguish it from that reverential fear which true religion demands of us. The first is in the cause; ignorance, or rather misapprehensions of God, and a perversion of the sense of right and wrong: the second is in the effect; something frivolous at best, often flagitious. In either case, even in that which to a superficial view may appear quite harmless, the tendency is plainly to lull the conscience, and give security in sin. The spirit of superstition is in Scripture very properly termed *a spirit of bondage* ‡. Through this medium the divine being appears to the worshippers as a capricious and tyrannical master to his wretched slaves. They will not say so; perhaps they will not believe that they think so: But their latent sentiments belie their professions, and evince, that when they use a different language, they but flatter him with their tongue. If it is true of the love which animates the perfect, that it excludes fear, it is equally true of the fear which awes the superstitious, that it excludes love. For this reason it has been justly observed of superstition, that whatever be the outward appearance it assumes, there is always more or less of *demonism* at bottom.

Diametrically opposite in both respects, in cause and effect, is the fear of the religious. It is founded in a veneration of the perfections and moral government of God, in a sense of hu-

* Isa. i. 16, 17. † Matth. vii. 21. ‡ Rom. viii. 15.

man frailty and depravity. Its tendency is, to produce vigilance for the preservation and improvement of whatever is praiseworthy in the character, and for the reformation of whatever is amiss. That the superstitious should be misled by the same errors and grossness of imagination in fixing on the remedy, that they were misled by in accounting for the cause of the horrors raised in their minds, is by no means to be wondered at: but that any person of discernment should not perceive, or any person of impartiality should not acknowledge, the difference in this respect between the spirit of religion, and the spirit of superstition, is indeed wonderful. An atheist, who admits the distinction between moral good and ill, (and this he may admit, as well as the distinction between beauty and deformity) must be sensible of the difference now pointed out: he must be sensible, that the aspect of the demon superstition is not more malignant, than that of the cherub Religion is friendly, to society.

But it is not by this horrid feature only that false religion is distinguished from the true. The apostle, by contrasting it with the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, suggests to us, that in the counterfeit there is always weakness, in conjunction often with malevolence, and sometimes even with a species of insanity.

From what has been said, it is evident, that the terrors of superstition imply weakness or imbecility of mind; as they arise from ignorance of God, and of one's self, a vitiated understanding, frequently accompanied with a perverted conscience. But the same cause produces different effects on the temper, as it happens to be differently allied. In the apprehensive and timorous, the effect is *Superstition*; in the arrogant and daring, it is *Enthusiasm*. *Ignorance* is the mother of both by different fathers. The second she had by *Presumption*; the first by *Fear*. Hence that wonderful mixture of contrariety and resemblance in the characters of the children. There have been times, and there are places, in which some of the priesthood have maintained, that ignorance is the mother of devotion. Have not such unwarily betrayed by this adage, to what family their devotion belongs? Can it be related to that religion wherein the knowledge of God is of more account than burnt-

offerings *? We must own indeed, that its affinity to that worship which Pagan Athens anciently paid to the unknown God †, cannot reasonably be disputed.

Further, it was remarked, that a degree of malevolence often enters into the composition of false religion. It is natural to suppose, that the temper of the adorers will take a tincture from the character they ascribe to the divinity they adore. The more powerful and the more perfect in other respects he is conceived to be, the greater is the influence which the moral dispositions they attribute to him will have upon their own. Nor are we to judge of those dispositions by the terms in which the devotees speak of their deity, but by the actions and conduct which they impute to him, and by the sentiments wherewith they themselves are affected. As it has been observed of false religion, that it is founded on injurious apprehensions of the divine nature; so in superstition, particularly where the terrible predominates, these must imply a considerable share of malignity. And it merits our attention, that, in this respect, the errors of those who maintain the unity of the Godhead, are more pernicious than even the absurdities of polytheists, in that they have a greater influence on the temper of the votaries. With the latter, the character of the gods, like human characters, are avowedly a mixture of good qualities and of bad; with the former, the deity, in whatever colours they actually paint him, must still be celebrated as the pattern of excellence. Consequently, to be similarly affected with him, to hate those whom they suppose his enemies, and whom he hates, will be regarded by the worshippers even as a duty; and a duty so much the more meritorious, the stronger their obligations are, on other accounts, to love them. And from hating to exterminating, when that is practicable, the transition, as fatal experience has shown, is not difficult.

But however different in some respects the character of the enthusiast is supposed to be, there will be found, on examination, a stronger likeness in this very article than could at first be imagined. Nothing indeed can be more opposite than hope and fear, presumption and timidity; yet nothing can be more like than some of the consequences of these upon society. The

* Hos. vi. 6. † Acts xvii. 23.

fanatic considers himself as Heaven's favourite; and believes this to be either his peculiar prerogative, or, at least, a privilege he enjoys in common with a few. Hence a contempt of the far greater part of his species: And as those of this stamp are ever ready to canonize their own wildest reveries as divine illuminations, and to consider their own decisions as the oracles of God; on finding that they are not implicitly received as such by others, their pride instantly takes the alarm. And what shall serve to restrain its fury, when conscience and religion, the natural checks of passion, are corrupted and silenced? nay, which is worse, when false religion, and a misinformed conscience, are made to declare in its favour? Opposition then is branded with the name of impiety, and contradiction with that of blasphemy. Their own revenge, on the contrary, they dignify with the title of zeal; and malice against the person of an antagonist, they call love to his soul.

As to the last criterion mentioned, which stands opposed to *a sound mind*, it but too manifestly results, both in the superstitious and in the enthusiastic, from the other criteria already mentioned. By both are the dictates of common sense and the admonitions of conscience alike vilified and neglected. These, as merely human, and therefore fallacious guides, are superseded, in the one, by the most frivolous observances, which an authority that he calls venerable, or immemorial custom, hath imposed; and in the other, by the extravagancies of a heated brain. The symptoms of distemper are indeed different in the two characters. The superstitious person more resembles the idiot, and the enthusiast the madman. But as it will be allowed, that idiocy and madness are more nearly related to each other than either is to a sound mind; so the two species of false religion mentioned (however much they may be regarded as extremes) are more nearly connected with one another, than either is with that religion which alone merits the denomination of the true.

What has been advanced with regard to superstition, will be readily admitted by all who are ever so little acquainted with the history of the world. As to what has been said of enthusiasm, it may appear more doubtful. Its most extravagant flights are much rarer; and though its fervours are more vio-

lent while they last, they are extremely transient; and unless persecution minister fuel, they subside of themselves, and die away. Yet the effects of its rage have been too frequent not to vouch the truth of what has been affirmed. On the other hand, nothing is more inveterate than superstition. It insinuates itself silently and slowly; but is cruelly tenacious of its hold, and consequently by far the more dangerous of the two.

I shall only add, that it is not every mistake, even in regard to the divine nature, which can with propriety be denominated either superstitious or fanatical; though every mistake on this subject is doubtless of dangerous tendency in religion. But those errors only can be so denominated, which affect the moral attributes and government of God, which confound the natural distinctions of right and wrong, which inspire confidence where there is no ground of hope, or terror where there is no cause of fear.

So much for an outline of the character of both sorts of false religion, superstition and enthusiasm.

III. I come now, in the *third* place, to inquire into the character of true religion, which is delineated in my text as a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind: Of power, implying self-command, or the due government both of passion and appetite; of love to God and man, which is *the end of the commandment* *, and *the bond of perfectness* †. Each of these I once proposed to consider severally, explaining their nature, clearing them from the misrepresentations which false glosses have introduced, and showing in what manner the religion of Jesus illustrates and enforces them. I had even proceeded some way on this plan: But sensible at last that it was impossible to comprehend the whole in one discourse, I determined to desist, and to satisfy myself with the discussion of the third particular in the character, *a sound mind.* There is one reason at least for entering more minutely into this part of the subject, that it has been less attended to, and that this inattention has been the source even of those evils which have affected the other parts of the character.

* 1 Tim. i. 5. † Col. iii. 14.

A sound mind is here opposed to a frantic or disordered imagination, wherein the light of reason is obscured, if not extinguished, by the terrors of superstition, or the arrogance of fanaticism. Nor is there any lineament whereby True Religion may be more perfectly distinguished from every pretender which falsely assumes her name, than this good sense, or soundness of mind, that gives the finishing to her character.

In what regards the moral maxims of the gospel, and the dispositions which they are fitted to inspire, objectors have not found much matter of wrangling. Their consonance to the soundest dictates of the understanding, and the clearest intimations of conscience, is generally admitted. But it will be asked, Can this conformity to reason be affirmed also with regard to the speculative truths with which our religion brings us acquainted? Will the bright doctrines of revelation be found to have any coincidence with the discoveries we can make by the twilight of our natural faculties?

Before we can answer these questions intelligibly, it will be necessary to premise a few things which may contribute to throw light on the subject, and which are but too little minded in discussions of this nature. First, then, let it be remarked, that it is one thing to say, that the discovery of a particular truth is beyond the reach of reason, and another to affirm, that there is in such a tenet a contrariety to reason. Again, let it be observed, that to say there is something in such a proposition above our comprehension, is one thing, and to advance, that such a proposition is absurd, is another. I add one remark more, which is, that the far greater part of the natural knowledge with which a man of science is acquainted, he neither did derive, nor by any exertion whatever could derive, from his mental powers; but that he has gotten it by information from without; and that the only legitimate application of the intellectual faculty was, to enable him to apprehend the facts, and canvass the evidence.

I shall not enter into a separate discussion of the above observations; but shall take notice of some things which may serve at once to satisfy us of their truth, and to assist us in applying them. The history of past ages we derive solely from testimony. Our knowledge of countries which we never saw,

and the much greater part of natural history, must proceed to us entirely from the same source. It will be admitted, that on these topics, without such extraneous information, a man of the most enlightened reason, and the most acute discernment, could never investigate aught beyond the sphere of his corporeal senses. If then we receive from a book, pretending to contain a divine revelation, the account of what happened in a period preceding the date of civil history, Can it be justly sustained as an objection to the veracity of the writer, that he unravels a series of facts, which, by no use or improvement of reason, it would have been in our power to discover? This identical objection would operate equally against all the histories, natural or civil, foreign or domestic, and travels and voyages, that ever were, or ever will be in the world. Nor is this reasoning applicable only to such events as the creation, the fall, and the deluge. Its application to the discoveries revelation brings concerning the designs of Heaven for our recovery, and final happiness, stands precisely on the same footing.

On the other hand, Are we to receive, with an undistinguishing credulity, every report without examination. By no means. We have seen what is not the province of reason, let us now consider what is. An account is brought me of a distant country by one who has had an opportunity to be well informed. Many things he relates appear at first incredible, because unlike every thing I have seen or known. The inhabitants, he tells me, after killing their enemies, make a repast of them; they scruple not to bury the living child with the dead mother, if the infant has not been weaned before the parent's death; and the children suffer the parents to perish for want, when, through age and infirmities, they become burdensome *. Such manners, though strange, I should not on reflection pronounce impossible. Who can say, what all the possible consequences are of ignorance, barbarity, revenge, anarchy, and sloth? But if the historian or traveller should inform me, that their laws were founded on moral sentiments the reverse of ours; that it were criminal to speak truth, and meritorious to lie; laudable to break a promise, and culpable to keep it; that ingratitude were accounted

* Some of these customs have been ascribed by travellers to some of the wild Americans and Greenlanders. See Crantz, Charlevoix, &c.

an heroic virtue, and gratitude a detestable vice,—I should not hesitate a moment to pronounce, that no faith whatever were due to his narrative. Society can subsist, notwithstanding many vices, which, through a general depravity of manners, human laws might be too feeble to restrain. But with such laws and maxims as the last mentioned, the existence of society is incompatible. Their effect must be, not to draw men together, but drive them asunder, and make them flee one another like wild beasts. Again, suppose the relater should acquaint us, that the people of whom he wrote had made some progress in abstract knowledge; but that the axioms on which their sciences were founded, were opposite to ours; that with them two and three were equal to seven, a part was greater than the whole, and other suchlike. The intuitive discernment we have of the moral absurdity of those, and the natural inconsistency of these positions, is what no evidence could vanquish. On the other hand, the credibility of the facts related is no proof of their truth, though it be a foundation for inquiry. The next province of reason is, to examine the evidence by which the veracity of the writer is supported.

As to the incomprehensibility, or, to speak with greater precision, the imperfect comprehension of some infallible truths, this holds equally of many of the discoveries of reason as of the informations given us by divine revelation. I know not a clearer deduction from reason than this: 'Something has existed 'from eternity.' It is an immediate conclusion from two self-evident principles: 'Something now exists;' and, 'Whatever 'begins to exist must have a cause.' Yet what is more incomprehensible than eternal duration, or existence without beginning? To prevent mistakes, let it be observed further, that there is a difference between saying, that there is something in a doctrine which we cannot perfectly comprehend, and saying, that such a proposition is unintelligible. A sentence which to us is unintelligible we can neither believe nor disbelieve. It is words without meaning.——We may, through custom, acquiesce in phrases, and even acquire a sort of reverence for sounds, which we do not understand: a case not at all uncommon; but in such acquiescence, whatever name we give it, there is properly nothing of opinion or belief.

Now to apply what has been said, it is admitted, that in holy writ, many grand discoveries are made to which human unassisted reason never could have attained, no more than it can attain to the knowledge of the inhabitants of Saturn, or of any other of the planets. The powers of the mind have their limits as well as those of the body. We may as reasonably propose to reach the stars with our finger, as to extend our mental faculties beyond the bounds which Omnipotence has prescribed to them. It is likewise admitted, that many things are revealed to us, of which we have but an imperfect comprehension. The same holds, as was observed, of many of the discoveries of the light of nature. Almost all that relates to the eternal, infinite, and independent One, may be reckoned of this number. It will be farther admitted by the candid, that there are some things in the sacred volume which they do not understand. From the revolutions that happen in a track of ages, from the great differences to be found in the notions and customs which obtain in distant regions, from the imperfection of the knowledge which moderns can acquire in ancient languages, difficulties must arise as to the import of things, which were perfectly intelligible to the people to whom they were addressed. Nothing can be clearer from Scripture, than that every thing it contains is not given as of equal consequence. Some things are introduced incidentally in illustration of other things, and circumstances trivial in themselves, require to be mentioned for connecting a narration of importance. Perhaps in the prophetical writings it was intended, that many things should not be understood till after their accomplishment. But this we may warrantably affirm, that the great truths which require our faith, and the precepts which demand our obedience, are put in such a variety of lights, and so frequently inculcated, as to leave no reasonable doubt about their meaning.

The only thing therefore that remains for the vindication of the gospel on this article, is, to observe, that it presents us with nothing contradictory, either to any speculative truth deducible from reason, or to any moral sentiment which the universal suffrage of mankind shows to have the sanction of conscience. I am not ignorant, that our religion has been impeached on this head. But is it not manifest, that in this charge, difficulties

have been confounded with absurdities, things beyond the investigation of reason with things repugnant to it, and things imperfectly comprehended with things self-contradictory?

On the other hand, it is not to be dissembled, that the absurd glosses and incoherent comments which have been sometimes made on the sacred text, have given too great scope to the enemies of the faith, for the charge of inconsistency and nonsense. But let accusations of this kind light where they may; it is with the gospel as we find it pure in the fountain, and not as it is but too generally corrupted in the streams, that we are concerned. It has fared with the institution of Jesus, as it did with that of Moses: Corruptions have been introduced into both from the same source, and the commandments of God have been made of no effect by the traditions of men. Superstition and enthusiasm have gone to work, and conspired in disfiguring the beauty, and destroying the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. Whether men have derived their opinions from the reveries of their own fancy, or imbibed them implicitly from those in whom they confided, they have commonly had recourse to the Bible, not to inquire without prepossessions into the doctrine contained there, but to seek for arguments in support of the tenets they had previously adopted.

Hence the many curious expedients by which the gospel, if I may so express myself, has been put to the torture, to make it speak the various and discordant sentiments of the multifarious and jarring sects into which the Christian world is unfortunately split. Every party, one would think, fancies itself possessed of the only key to the heavenly treasure contained in the Bible. Certain it is that every party finds things there which none but themselves can discover. Nevertheless in the general modes of expounding almost all seem to be pretty well agreed. The true partisan, of whatever party he be, neglecting the plain declarations of Scripture (which are far the most numerous) as of no moment, recurs chiefly, for the support of his system, to those passages wherein there is some difficulty. Again, when it suits his purpose, renouncing the use of common sense, what the ordinary idioms of language and rules of interpretation require to be understood figuratively, he explains literally; what, on the contrary, the scope of the context requires to be understood

as literal, he explains as figurative. By such ingenious methods, which give so large a field for imagination to range in, he never fails to attain his end. Persons of the most repugnant sentiments make the experiment with equal success. The Scripture is neither ambiguous nor obscure; but men's judgments are pre-engaged ere they examine it. They do not try other teachers by this rule, but this rule by the doctrine of some favourite teacher. They admit it only in the sense it pleases him. Hence it is made the foundation of various systems. But it would be no hard matter to evince, that any performance whatever, the *Alcoran* for example, or the *Mishna*, or the *Sadder*, might be made to support their theories with the same facility.

Where do we now find any attention paid to these important lessons of our Lord? *Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master*, [leader, guide *, as the word imports,] *even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ* †. On the contrary, the Christian world has gotten many masters and rabbies, fathers and guides, under whom, as their respective leaders and heads, they severally class themselves, and to whose several tribunals in doctrine, we must own, if we speak impartially, they more properly make Christ himself amenable, than them to his.

But whence came originally these deviations from good sense, from that soundness of mind which shines forth in the writings of the apostles and the evangelists, and is so rarely found (I may say never without some alloy) in the religious compositions of after ages? One great spring of this evil was that rage of dogmatizing which so early showed itself in a variety of shapes. When the doctrine of Jesus began to spread through all the states of Greece, and to make many proselytes among that ingenious, inquisitive, and disputatious people, who were then divided into philosophical sects, it might naturally be expected, that converts from different sects who had not thoroughly im-

* The original word is καθηγητης, which has properly this power. It occurs thrice in the passage quoted, and no where else in the New Testament.

† Matth. xxiii. 8—10.

bibed the spirit of the religion they had so recently been taught, still retaining a tincture of their former sentiments in regard to theology and morals, and so warped from the truth in different ways, would soon disagree among themselves, concerning the doctrine of that gospel which they had received. Each would exercise his ingenuity in giving such a turn to the dictates of revelation as would make them appear conformable to his favourite opinions, and would conciliate both, where they appeared to clash. When the rein is once given to Fancy, she is not easily curbed even in her wildest excursions. Subtle and inventive heads would be daily publishing their own visions as the oracles of God.

Even in the apostolic age, these seeds of dissension were beginning to spring up. Paul perceived the evil; and, having traced the cause, gave warning of the danger, *Beware*, says he, *lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ* *. It is not his view to discourage the pursuit of science, or to dissuade from the study of the works of God, which, by his own testimony †, are one way of leading to the knowledge of their author. But using words according to their acceptation at the time, he alludes to the philosophic systems then in vogue, as is implied in the expression, *after the tradition of men* ‡.

Now what would be the consequences of this presumption on the doctrinal part of our religion? It cannot be doubted, but that some of the truths of revelation would be explained away to make room for the dreams of visionaries. Thus there were some in the infancy of the church who had so far deviated from the faith, as to affirm, that the resurrection was past already §. Another, and more common consequence, was, to incorporate into the body of Christian doctrine, a number of adventitious

* Col. ii. 8. † Rom. i. 19, 20.

‡ F. Paul, in his history of the Council of Trent, b. 2. after relating their decrees on Justification, says, very pertinently, 'In che haveva gran parte Aris-'totele coll' haver distinto essattamente tutti i generi di cause; a che, se egli 'non fosse adoperato, noi mancavano di molti articoli di fede.' That synod however has not been singular in exposing themselves to an imputation of this sort.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 18.

tenets, to which it had no affinity, and with which it was very ill fitted to coalesce. This is no doubt that wood, hay, and stubble, which the great instructor of the Gentile world, so often quoted, informs us, that some conceited builders would pile up on the only foundation, Jesus Christ *. A third consequence would be, that men, getting beyond the sphere of human knowledge, would come at last, in their airy flights, to mistake shadows for realities, to substitute signs for ideas, and words for things, fighting with one another about names and phrases to which no precise meaning can be affixed. This is what our apostle warns Timothy to avoid, calling it *profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called* †. And in another place, *vain jangling*; and assures us, that those who had *turned aside to it, understood neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed* ‡. An evil this, which has infested the church from the beginning, and but too plainly infests it to this moment.

The two last consequences seem to have arisen from the absurd presumption to which men have ever shown themselves prone, of the all-sufficiency of their own powers. Not satisfied with the naked declarations of holy writ, they must enquire into the manner in which every promise is to be fulfilled, and every effect is to be produced, and every operation is to be conducted. On all these points they have dared to pronounce dogmatically. Other dogmatists have arisen no less confident in their own abilities, who have entered into the question, and given a contrary decision. Then was kindled the theologic war. The people were divided. Some listed themselves under one captain, others under another. Each party had recourse to scripture as a common magazine for arms wherewith to encounter the adverse party. Each imagined he succeeded in the application, and, confident of his own prowess and ability, each boasted of the victory. In process of time, councils were called to end the strife. Councils thought that it suited their dignity on every question to be decisive; and out of their decision of one question, several others have arisen.

Now, the radical error was the notion, that religion was concerned on a particular side, or that the Scripture had said any

* 1 Cor. iii. 12. † 1 Tim. vi. 20.; 2 Tim. i. 16. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 6, 7.

thing which could serve to decide the point debated. Religion was concerned in the discouragement of such controversies, alike impertinent and presumptuous. But the way which was taken was the surest method possible to give them weight.

Methinks I hear it asked with surprise, Is there any question relative to religion on which the Scripture is neutral? I must beg leave to ask in return, Was it the intention of the Scripture to render man omniscient?—Are there not many things on every subject which we cannot apprehend?—And are there not particularly on the sublimest of all subjects, the divine operations, certain things which God has not seen meet to communicate to us, and which, consequently, it is neither pious nor modest in us to enquire into? And if one man be audacious enough to over-leap the fence, and enter on interdicted ground, Is it for us to be equally impious, and, in order to encounter him, to commit the same trespass? *Secret things*, says Moses, *belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong to us, and to our children for ever* *. Our Saviour on every occasion shows a disposition to check questions of mere curiosity about things beyond our sphere, the knowledge of which God had reserved to himself †. And are there not questions from which the apostle Paul admonishes us to abstain altogether? *Foolish and unedifying* ‡ *questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes* §.

The apostle's example was conformable to his precept. Some in his time began to dogmatize on the ministry and mediation of angels, from which they inferred the propriety of worshipping them. As to the inference, he expressly condemns whatever might injure the purity and simplicity of worship. But as to the dogmas on which those teachers founded, Does he think it necessary to establish a theory of his own in opposition to theirs, according to the invariable policy of succeeding ages? Does he even so much as say whether their opinions be true or false? He does neither. He only informs us, that they

* Deut. xxix. 29.

† Matth. xviii. 1, &c.; Luke xiii. 23, &c.; John xxi. 21, 22.; Acts i. 6, 7.

‡ ἀπαίδευτος improperly rendered here by our translators *unlearned*. The word occurs often in the Septuagint, and signifies *impertinent, uninstructive*.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 23.

are points in which we have no concern, and of which we have not the means of arriving at the knowledge. *Intruding*, says the apostle, speaking of a teacher of this stamp, *into those things which he hath not seen.* And what is the cause? Arrogance and self-conceit. *Vainly puft up by his fleshly mind* *; fondly elated with his own imagined sublime discoveries.

Happy had it been for the church if its rulers had continued to be actuated by that soundness of mind which was so well exemplified, and so warmly recommended, by the first propagators of the faith. A general sense of the futility of such speculations and verbal controversies, and their pernicious tendency in subverting charity, the end of all religion, in promoting contention, the bane of social life, and in exposing the gospel to the derision of unbelievers, as though it were intended solely for a subject of altercation, would have quashed those discussions on their first appearance, and put their authors out of countenance. If any thing could have mortified them, it would have been to find, that they met, I say not with contempt, but pity, instead of admiration; and that by those very means by which they wanted to display a more than ordinary acquaintance with what they termed *the mysteries of religion*, they had only betrayed a more than ordinary ignorance of its spirit.

Heresy, as it is called, or error in points wherein religion is supposed to be concerned, has been compared to the hydra, a many-headed monster of the poets. In nothing does the comparison hold more closely than in this, that when by the ecclesiastic sword wielded by popes or councils, any of those heads have been struck off, at least double the number have sprung up in their room. Agreeably to the warning which had been given †, they have increased to more ungodliness.

Now, if fanaticism excited the broachers of such impertinencies, superstition confirmed the attachment of their adherents. The effects were correspondent to the cause. Hear the apostle as to both. *If any man consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of*

* Col. ii. 18. † 2 Tim. ii. 16.

men of corrupt minds *. How far church history justifies the observation, let every intelligent hearer judge.

But it is not the doctrine of the gospel only that has been thus vitiated. The same spirit of false religion, the declared enemy of a sound mind or sober reason, began also to infect the morals. What tended only to make men resigned to Heaven, and useful to mankind; what tended but to promote rational piety, temperance, justice, and beneficence, was in no estimation at all. Extravagancies, the most marvellous and the most frantic, such as dishonoured the name of religion, and rendered men worse than useless, were considered as the most sublime attainments in the Christian life.

Religion prohibits our being the slaves of appetite, commands us to subdue sensual desires, and bring the body into subjection to the law of the mind. We must not be the votaries of pleasure, if we would be agreeable to God. The less pleasure then, says superstition, we admit on any account, and the more pain we inflict on ourselves, we are the more perfect, and the more acceptable to him. Hence vows of abstinence, vows of celibacy, and others of the same kind, by which monks and anchorets seclude themselves from the world, and take a dispensation from discharging duties, which, by the irrevocable law of our nature, every man owes to his fellows. Religion forbids covetousness, restrains anxiety about worldly things, and commands us to seek first the kingdom of God. From the same spirit of interpreting, which pays no regard to the meaning or purpose of a precept, have sprung vows of poverty, as they are called; or, as they should be called, vows of idleness. As the Pharisees had a commodious expedient for releasing children from the duty they owed their parents, by what had at least the name of a donation to the altar †: so these think they consecrate themselves to God, by swearing solemnly, that they shall be unprofitable to men; rather, indeed, that they shall be public nuisances, lay a tax on the sweat of industry, and intercept the alms held forth by the hand of charity to real indigence. For the gospel acknowledges no poor but those who not only are in want, but whom Providence has rendered incapable of earning a subsistence

* 1 Tim. vi. 3, &c. † Matth. xv. 3, &c.; Mark vii. 9, &c.

to themselves. With regard to others, the maxim is, They that will not work, neither should they eat *.

In such absurdities however we must do them the justice to acknowledge, that they have not been singular. From sacred history we learn, that the votaries both of Baal and of Moloch were actuated by the like principle. Similar penances and austerities are practised at this day by the Mahometan dervises. Nay a much higher pitch of perfection is attained by those Indian mendicants the Fakiers, devotees of the being with the thousand names. And what shall we say of the holy tortures so unmercifully inflicted on their own flesh by the Chinese bonzas, another set of itinerant mendicants, in honour of the god Fo. For him too they con over their rosaries, and make processions and pilgrimages †. Superstition is the same under every denomination. The form and the garb may be different, but the spirit is the same. In every age and every nation it may be easily distinguished by this indelible mark, that it makes the service of its supposed divinity the very reverse of a reasonable service, and consequently of the character which Paul gives us of the service of the true God ‡.

Another engine of superstition, by which she has tainted the morals of the gospel, is a distinction she has suggested between the cause of God and the cause of virtue or integrity. These she artfully insinuates, may, in certain circumstances, be found to clash. When that happens, the latter must be sacrificed to the former. The immorality of the action, considered by itself, is not to be regarded, but the good to which it may be rendered conducive. When immoral actions are employed to promote the interests of religion, the end sanctifies the means, the purity of the motive effaces the crime.

* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

† This eastern superstition, by the account we have of it from Pere Du Halde, a Jesuit missionary, bears an astonishing resemblance to the corruptions which have been introduced into the Christian church. Both have their invocations, in turning over their beads. But whether the syllables, *O mi to fo*, pronounced by a Chinese, have more or less virtue than the syllables *Jesu Maria*, pronounced by a Romanist, let him who thinks a sound mind has any concern in religion, say.

‡ Rom. xii. 1.

By this accursed casuistry, fraud and perfidy, rebellion, murder, and treason, have been sometimes justified, nay, even canonized. They have been celebrated as a kind of heroism in piety, and a triumph of grace over nature.—Wherever this doctrine has been learnt, it was never learnt in the blood of Christ. It strikes at the root of both natural and revealed religion, undermines the foundation of the love of God, and subverts all the evidence of the essential difference between good and ill, right and wrong.

Such maxims seem to have been imputed to the primitive Christians (for what evil was not imputed to them?) by some of the most rancorous of their foes. The apostle Paul treats the imputation as a calumny, and speaks of the maxim with abhorrence. *If*, says he, in the character of an objector, *the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie to his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? and not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just* *. His opinion on this subject was the same with that of the pious Job, who considered it as a wretched apology for deceit or lying, to say, that it was in the service of God †. In fact, an excuse of this sort is but adding absurdity, not to say blasphemy, to wickedness, and representing purity itself as our corruptor. The cause of God is the cause of universal rectitude: That it must ever continue such, results from the immutability of God. This is the law of our nature, and founded in the moral perfections of its author. This, by the concurrent voice of conscience, and of revelation, we are taught to revere as the invariable rule of our conduct.

Piety and good sense both require, that we leave the direction of events to the superintendence of that all-wise Providence which rules the world, and is constantly employed in educing good from evil. Of the remote consequences of things, we short-sighted creatures are very incompetent judges. Our case would be deplorable indeed, all society must quickly go to wreck, if we had not a directory more explicit than such a foresight to recur to. The dictates of conscience, according to Paul, show the work of God's law written on the heart ‡. It

* Rom. iii. 7, 8. † Job xiii. 7, 8. ‡ Rom. ii. 14, 15.

is the same searching spirit which Solomon aptly calls the candle of the Lord *. The voice of conscience, therefore, is the voice of God; and God cannot contradict himself.

By this monitor I am forbidden to betray a trust. You, who are no doubt a subtle casuist, tell me, 'The present case is par-'ticular, and not to be determined by a general rule, which 'may do very well in ordinary cases. In this individual in-'stance, even treachery is meritorious, as it may be made sub-'servient to the cause of religion.' The cause of religion! Impossible! Had you said, the cause of irreligion, the cause of the devil, the father of lies and murder, I could have understood you. You resume, 'The interest of the church of Christ 'may be promoted.' That we may understand one another, and not fight in the dark, permit me, good Sir, to ask a plain question, What is the church of Christ? For if we recur to the New Testament for an explanation, it is no other than the community of his faithful disciples, actuated by his Spirit; for *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* †. I shall add one question more, What is the interest of this church? In the view which our religion gives of it, it is not their wealth, or rank, or fame, or even the security of their lives and fortunes; but it is their advancement in faith and purity. Can I, then, by corrupting one of the members, and hazarding the infection of the rest, advance the purity of the whole? Indeed, if you mean by the church, according to the acceptation of the word with many, a certain order of men only; and if you mean by their interest, their lucrative offices, dignity, and power, and the credit of those dogmas on which the whole is founded; I shall admit, that the cause of the church, in your sense of the word, and the cause of virtue, which is the cause of God, may be as opposite as truth and falsehood, heaven and hell.

'But you can quote the best authorities, learned theologues, 'profound scholars, invincible doctors: You can do more; you 'can support your opinion by the rescripts of popes, and pre-'cedents taken from the practice of councils.' To a mind not blinded by superstition, all your authorities signify nothing. On the one side is the voice of God; on the other are the sophisms of weak, corrupt, and interested men. He will reply,

* Prov. xx. 27. † Rom. viii. 9.

Let God be true, and every man a liar *. 'But you are illu-'minated by the unerring Spirit of God.' It is not within the compass of possibility, to produce a proof of your claim, which shall counterbalance the evidence I have, that it is contrary to the will of Heaven, to lie, to betray, to murder. Miracles themselves would not answer your purpose. Reason and Scripture both teach me, and it is allowed on all sides, that these cannot be admitted in proof of what is either absurd or impious. Should one work a miracle at noon, in order to prove that it is midnight; could his proof have any other effect but to confound? Before it could convince, all the foundations of belief, and consequently the evidence of its own reality, must be entirely rased.

There are doctrines, then, which are not to be admitted on the authority of pontiffs and councils. An apostle of Christ is our warrant for using a much bolder expression, and saying, there are doctrines, which, though an apostle of Christ, or an angel from heaven, should preach to us we ought not to receive †. And of this sort surely, is that which calls evil good, and good evil; which puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; which puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ‡; which corrupts morality in the fountain, and depraves the discernment that God has given us of right and wrong. *If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness* §?

I now consider another strong-hold of superstition, the ritual of worship, and the effects which on this article have been produced on the religion of Jesus. If we attend to the Christian institution in its native simplicity, as it appears in the New Testament, nothing can seem in this respect less adapted to furnish a handle to the superstitious. No reverence is inculcated for times or places, no sanctity ascribed to utensils or vestments, no distinction made of aliments, as recommending more or less to the favour of Heaven. Its ceremonies were few and simple, calculated for promoting faith and purity. Ceremonies, however, there must be, in a religion intended for man, who is constituted of a body as well as a soul; the body containing the organs necessary both for conveying information to the soul, and for communicating to others her sensations. Cere-

* Rom. iii. 4. † Gal. i. 8. ‡ Isa. v. 20. § Matth. vi. 23.

monies also there must be in religion intended for society, which requires a certain external order wherein men are to join. And to every thing in which men can be occupied, time and place are requisite. The noblest things are capable of being perverted to the vilest purposes: and in the general decline of good sense and charity, folly can never be at a loss for tools to work with, or matter to work upon.

It is difficult to express one's self on this subject with such precision, as not to run the risk of being misunderstood one way or other, and perhaps of misleading the unwary. As the outward institutions are the means devised by infinite wisdom for our improvement in faith and holiness, to depreciate the means, must in effect prove injurious to the end; and a general neglect of them has but too manifest a tendency to atheism and irreligion. On the other hand, as they are but the means, immoderately to exalt them leads as manifestly to superstition and hypocrisy; and that by bringing men either themselves to substitute the means for the end, or to seek to raise their character by taking the advantage of this error in others. This perhaps, considering the weakness of human nature, is that extreme to which the generality of mankind are most liable. The tendency of the first is the disuse of the means, of the second the abuse of them. As both are subversive of true religion, we ought never, through fear of one extreme, which to us may appear the worst, to permit men unwarned to run into the other. This fear did not deter the prophets under the old dispensation, nor our Saviour and his apostles under the new, from representing things plainly as they were, and particularly from remonstrating in the warmest manner against the superstitious use that was often made of the ordinances of religion. The only sure chart by which the Christian course can be directed, is the truth. We can never safely turn aside from it either to the right hand or the left.

It is impossible for an unprejudiced mind to examine the gospel with attention, and not perceive, that it is repugnant to its genius to lay any stress on mere externals.—Every ceremonial performance, however highly venerated by the people amongst whom our Lord resided, and to whom the gospel was first published, is represented as incapable of recommending

the soul to God. God required mercy and not sacrifice *. The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath †. It was not that which went into the mouth that defiled the man ‡. Nor was it their endless ablutions of the body that could purify the conscience §. It was not the worshipping in the Temple, nor on Mount Gerizzim, that was the thing of consequence ‖. The apostles talk in the same strain. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing ¶. Meat commendeth us not to God **. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink ††. The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ‡‡. Our Lord plainly acquaints his disciples, that no pretensions of intimacy with him, zeal in his cause, or regard to positive appointments, would be of any avail to a worker of iniquity §§.——As to the Jewish ceremonies, they are termed a yoke of bondage ‖‖; a yoke which neither they of that age nor their fathers were able to bear ¶¶. The church, or commonwealth of God, whilst under them, was considered as in a state of non-age, like a child not arrived at the full exercise of reason, under tutors and preceptors, subjected to many cumbersome regulations, which derived their utility and fitness from his insufficiency. They are therefore styled *the elements of this world* ***, *and weak and beggarly elements* †††.

The institution of Christ, on the contrary, is exhibited to us as a spiritual law ‡‡‡, a law of rational and manly liberty §§§. The few exterior rites which it admits are regarded purely as means; and consequently the value of the observance must arise, either from its being used with a view to improvement, or from its being a genuine expression of devout affection, or a sincere engagement to a Christian life.—But is there not something more in them? Have we not ground to believe that they are accompanied with the divine benediction? Yes, doubt-

* Matth. ix. 13.; xii. 7.
† Mark ii. 27.
‡ Matth. xv. 11.
§ Matth. xv. 20.; Mark vii. 3, &c.
‖ John iv. 20—23.
¶ 1 Cor. vii. 19.; Gal. v. 6.; vi. 15.
** 1 Cor. viii. 8.
†† Rom. xiv. 17.
‡‡ Acts vii. 48.
§§ Matth. vii. 22, 23.; Luke xiii. 26, 27.
‖‖ Gal. v. 1.
¶¶ Acts xv. 10.
*** Gal. iv. 1—3.
††† Gal. iv. 9.
‡‡‡ Rom. viii. 2.
§§§ James i. 25.; ii. 12.

less; the pious and suitable use of them is so accompanied. In any other use prayer is abominable *, and sacrifice profane †.

Quickly, indeed, did men begin to lose sight of the use, when employed in the exercises of religion. Ceremonies were daily multiplied; and, under pretence of being rendered more awful, they were gradually disguised by such mummeries, that at length it was not possible to conceive any other purpose they could answer, but to beget in the ignorant a stupid wonder, and in the fearful a superstitious dread. The very multiplication of mere rites, which are but secondary and instrumental, takes off men's attention from that which is primary and essential. But the matter did not rest here. It was indeed impossible that it should. Miraculous virtues began to be ascribed to the bare celebration of the rites; and astonishing tenets began to be broached about their nature and efficacy. Every thing moral, every thing spiritual, in the divine service, came to be supplied by things merely sensible. In process of time the understanding was conceived to have so little concern in the matter, that it was of no consequence whether the language employed in worship was understood by the worshippers, or not. Penance was substituted in lieu of repentance, public worship dwindled into pageantry, and private devotion into telling of beads. Thus the most sublime, the most manly, the most rational institution, at length sunk into the most abject, the most puerile, the most absurd. I might add, the most benevolent religion, into the most malignant superstition. O degenerate Christians! if yet I can call you Christians, who has bewitched you? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Dare ye say, that ye have stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free? and that ye have taken care not to be entangled again with a yoke of bondage ‡? Ye have had warning. Ye see with what severity the apostle treated in others the very slightest symptoms of this disease, now so inveterate in

* Prov. xxviii. 9. † Isa. lxvi. 3.

‡ Μὴ πάλιν ζυγῳ δουλειας ενεχεσθε. The apostle says, ζυλω, without the article. Our translators have not so properly rendered it *the yoke*, as though it related only to the Jewish. Those ceremonies he opposes not because they were Jewish, but because they were a grievous yoke, and gendered to bondage.

you *. But what effect have either reproaches or admonitions had on you?

I must indeed acknowledge, that so great and so universal a defection could not fail to furnish the adversaries of our religion with at least a plausible argument against it, if this very defection had not been so expressly, and so particularly, foretold in Scripture. That it has been so foretold, produces now a contrary effect, and supplies the friends of Christianity with a strong argument in its defence.

But to return: To ascribe a virtue to an outward form, unaccompanied by any disposition that can render it significant †, I take to be of the essence of superstition, and in a great degree subversive of true religion. It represents the ordinances of Jesus as no better than magical spells. For where is the difference, if the effect in both result purely from words and gestures? Besides, who will think of purity of heart, if washing the body will do the business? who will study reformation of life, if punctuality in certain rites will cancel his guilt ‡?

To enumerate the particular instances of this abuse would be endless. I shall only specify one, which is very general. Has not the remission of sins been ascribed to the rite of baptism? and, in consequence of this, has not the indispensable necessity of that ordinance to salvation been strenuously maintained? I own I mention this sentiment the rather, because it is a remainder of the old leaven, which many of the Reformed have not yet entirely purged out. Shall I be deemed to derogate from a Christian institution of the greatest utility, when rightly understood, and used, because I would clear it from those misrepresentations which tend to pervert its nature, and frustrate its design? On the same principle the prophets, and apostles,

* Gal. iii. 1, &c.; v. 1, &c.

† This is what the council of Trent has called the *opus operatum*.

‡ Audio, vidoque, plurimos esse que in locis, vestibus, cibis, jejuniis, gesticulationibus, cantibus, summam pietatis constituunt; et ex his proximum judicant contra præceptum evangelicum. Unde fit, ut cum omnia referantur ad fidem et caritatem, harum rerum superstitione extinguatur utrumque. Procul enim abest a fide evangelica, que fidit hujusmodi factis; et procul abest a caritate Christiana, que ob potum aut cibium, quo recte quis uti potest, exasperat fratrem, pro cujus libertate mortuus est Christus. Erasmi Ἰχθυοφαγία.—The whole dialogue is an illustration of this truth.

and even Christ himself, could not have escaped the censure of vilifying the most solemn rites of divine appointment, when, with some warmth, they represented to a superstitious nation, that they ascribed to them an efficacy which did not belong to them. On the contrary, by acting thus, the ordinance is in the most effectual manner honoured, the reasonableness of the service shown, and the ways of God vindicated.

Of such formalists in devotion as can suppose, that the most precious gifts of Heaven depend upon external rites, allow me to ask, Was not the faith and confession of the thief on the cross available to his salvation, without baptism *? Was not Cornelius the centurion in a state of acceptance with God, before his being in this manner admitted into the church, and outwardly assuming the yoke of Christ? The demonstration of his being so by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is the very cause assigned by Peter of his admitting him, and those with him, though uncircumcised, to baptism: *Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did to us, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God* †? Afterwards, alluding to the same memorable event, he says, *God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did to us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith* ‡. Is not this telling us, God showed us evidently by those extraordinary gifts, that he had received them into favour as his people; and could we, after that, without impiety, refuse to admit them by the symbol of baptism into our communion as brethren?

It will scarcely be pretended, by any whose sole rule of faith is holy writ, that baptism is of greater efficacy under the new economy than circumcision was under the old. That this ceremony was essential to a state of acceptance with God, was the doctrine of many Jewish Rabbies, and of all the Judaizing teachers among the Christians §. Superstition, of whatever time or place, and however diversified, is uniform in character, and always attends more to the form than to the power, to the letter than to the spirit of every institution. The contrary side, with regard to circumcision, the apostle Paul has maintained,

* Luke xxiii. 39, &c.
† Acts xi. 17.
‡ Acts xv. 8, 9.
§ Acts xx. 1.

in a manner which admits no reply. Thus he argues concerning Abraham: *We say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised* *. But we need not found our reasoning entirely on the analogy of the two ordinances. The same argument which the apostle here uses will apply literally to the point in hand. The fact lately quoted is as apposite in the one case as the story of Abraham is in the other. 'We say, then, that the 'hearts of Cornelius, and the other Gentiles, who were with 'him, were purified by faith? How were they purified? was it 'in baptism, or before being baptized? Not in baptism, but be-'fore being baptized. And they received the sign of baptism, 'a seal of the purification by faith, which they had yet being 'unbaptized.'

The doctrine that we are now combating is precisely the same with that which Paul so warmly combated in those Judaizers. The application only is different. It is not against the ceremony of circumcision that his arguments are levelled, as I propose soon clearly to evince, but against the principle by which the ceremony was enforced, and which he considers as subversive of the spirit of religion. What was that principle? It was that which attached the pardon of sin and the favour of God to external observances. It is a matter of little consequence, what the particular observance is. It was the spirit of Judaism, and not the form, that he so vehemently, and so successfully, opposed. I do not mean, by Judaism, the Old Testament dispensation as given by Moses, but as adulterated afterwards by the traditions of the elders, and the Rabbinical commentaries. The former, the pure Mosiac establishment, the apostle vindicates from this charge. According to it, *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise is not of men, but of God* †. The same is the doctrine of the apostle Peter, concerning that baptism by which we Christians are sav-

* Rom. vi. 9—11. † Rom. ii. 28, 29.

ed. It is not, he tells us, *the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God* *. In neither case is it the sign itself; but it is that renovation of mind which is stipulated by it. Baptism is represented as a sign of regeneration; and, by a very common idiom, those qualities are sometimes attributed to the sign which belong properly to the thing signified. In this place, however, the apostle has so qualified his expression as not to leave a colour for mistake. I shall therefore conclude this argument, by saying, in the spirit of both apostles, and almost in the words of the former, 'He is not a Christian who is one outwardly; neither is that 'baptism which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Christian 'who is one inwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, in the 'spirit, whose praise is not of men, but of God.'

Thus I have given a sketch of the most general principles of corruption, which, when men seemed to think that a sound mind had no concern in religion, tainted the Christian system in every part, in doctrine, morals, and worship. I have hitherto taken notice only of those causes which hold of the spirit of false religion. That other causes co-operated, is but too evident. From the turn things quickly took, the deception of the many came to be regarded as the interest of the few. I do not mean by this to charge the whole clerical order, or even the greater part of them, as knowingly sacrificing the truth to secular views. I would not affirm, that, even in the leaders themselves, all were to be put to the account of priestcraft, and nothing to that of superstition or enthusiasm. That motives will operate upon us, whereof we are in some respect unconscious, is a truth which I shall soon exemplify in two of the disciples. The understanding is too generally the dupe of the passions; and we are easily brought to believe what would gratify a predominant inclination. It is with peculiar propriety said in Scripture, that *a gift blindeth the wise* †. His imagined interest even perverts his judgment. A man may be said, in some sense, conscientiously to pursue a course, to which originally avarice, or the lust of dominion, was the prime mover. But in so great a variety of agents, there would no doubt be a variety of motives, and often a mixture of these in the same

* 1 Pet. iii. 21. † Exod. xxiii. 8.

person. That covetousness and ambition joined their aids, it is impossible to doubt, when one considers how uniformly all the abuses pointed to the aggrandisement of a particular class.

How much was Peter shocked at the impiety of Simon Magus, who offered him money for the power of conferring the Holy Ghost by the imposition of his hands *? What would have been the apostle's indignation, to have seen his pretended successors set a price on the pardon of sin, a gift of Heaven of infinitely more consequence than miraculous powers! Once he was astonished at his Master's declaration, that it was difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God †; but how much greater would his astonishment have been, to find, that the only difficulty now was for a poor man to get thither; and that the woes denounced against the rich, and blessings pronounced upon the poor ‡, ought all to be reversed.

Nor was this the only instance of an opposition in the maxims that were afterwards adopted, to those of him, who, being the founder and the finisher of the faith, cannot be supposed to have left any thing defective for them to supply, much less any thing wrong for them to alter. The benign language of his doctrine was, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice* §; the exercise of the moral virtues, rather than any ritual performances. Theirs, on the contrary, clamours loudly in our ears, 'I will have sa-'crifice, and not mercy.' Christ told his apostles, that he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, strictly charging them to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves ‖. It was after the revolution of not many ages, when those who pretended to derive their authority from this celestial source, having gotten the power into their hands,—showed themselves, by the most cruel evidences, to be wolves in the midst of sheep.

What shall I say of that spirit of persecution, the disgrace of humanity, the reproach of religion, the poison of life, which most preposterously, under the banner of the cross, has tyrannized with unrelenting fury? What is that kingdom of God, permit me to ask the persecutor, which you desire to promote

* Acts viii. 18, &c.
† Matth. xix. 23, &c.; Mark x. 23, &c.; Luke xviii. 24, &c.
‡ Luke vi. 20, 21, 24, 25. § Matth. ix. 13.; xii. 7.
‖ Matth. x. 16.

by such sanguinary methods? Paul tells us, *The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* *. To this the knowledge of the truths of the gospel is indeed eminently subservient. But are the threats of racks and gibbets the evidences of truth, or the means of giving conviction to the understanding? 'Perhaps not; yet they may induce people 'to profess the true faith, whether their profession be sincere or 'hypocritical.' Is it then the way of promoting truth, to tempt men to become liars? Do you advance righteousness by forcing them to commit iniquity? Do you contribute to their peace, by making them give a mortal wound to conscience, and rase the foundations of hope and joy? 'Ay, but though they should 'be dissemblers, their children may be orthodox believers; and, 'by proper examples of wholesome severity, others through 'terror are made submissive to the spiritual powers.' I see we differ too widely in first principles to be fit for arguing together. Two things you assume, which, in my judgment, are incompatible with the spirit of Christ. One is, That we may do evil to promote a good end; the other is, That Jesus came to establish the most absurd tyranny of a few, bestowing on them the extraordinary privilege of trampling on all the most sacred rights of mankind; for what is more sacred than veracity, than probity, than peace of conscience? I am satisfied, on the contrary, that not even the apostles themselves were vested by their master with any dominion over the faith of others. This dominion, though you, forsooth, presume to claim it, was explicitly disclaimed by them. Their only mean of converting was persuasion; their weapons, reason, Scripture, and the demonstration of the Spirit; their only armour, wisdom, meekness, fortitude, and patience †. O incorrigible! are you still so much in the spirit of Judaism, that no Messiah will suit you without a temporal kingdom? It is not an external profession, but an internal character, in which the life of Christ's religion consists. Whoever aims a blow here, aims it at the heart, at the very vitals of his institution. For *the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or, Lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you* ‡.

* Rom. xiv. 17.

† 2 Cor. i. 24.; v. 11, 20.; 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. ‡ Luke xvii. 20, 21.

Wouldst thou know then, O zealot, whether thou pertains to this spiritual kingdom? Search for its characters in thy own heart; and be assured, that if thou dost not find them there, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.

But you do not know the fiend by which you are actuated. Shall I attempt the discovery? Pride is hurt by contradiction. If this contradiction be in things of moment, or things we fancy such, and if persisted in, it seem to betray a contempt of our judgment; a contempt which we cannot easily brook, and have commonly but too strong a propensity to resent. This propensity is vicious; and it is what the spirit of the gospel, which is a spirit of love and forbearance, tends powerfully to correct. But if, unhappily, we be tinctured with the venom of superstition or fanaticism, or if we be duped by the villany and worldly aims of those in whose understanding we put confidence, we begin to view things in another manner; we christen our virulence by the name of *zeal*; and a most impure flame, brought originally from hell, we think it our duty to cherish as the holy fire of God's altar.

We have an admirable example in the history of our Lord, which so perfectly confirms what has been said, both in relation to mistaken zeal, and the true spirit of the gospel, that if aught could surprise us on this head, it would be surprising, that any who durst call themselves his followers should so flagrantly take up the plea of the disciples against their master. *It came to pass*, says the Evangelist *, *when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem; and sent messengers before his face. And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

The Samaritans, by our Saviour's own account, were in the

* Luke ix. 51, &c.

wrong in those articles wherein they differed from the Jews *. In the opprobrious style that is now so liberally bandied from sect to sect among Christians, they would have been heretics and schismatics. Bigots they certainly were, as appears from the matter of offence just now recited. Yet these pleas could have no weight with the two disciples in support of their argument, had they before that time thoroughly imbibed the spirit of the gospel. And have not some other passages of the Jewish history, equally foreign to the purpose, such as Samuel's hewing Agag before the Lord, and the extermination of the Canaanites, been strenuously pleaded by persons of opposite sects for the glorious privilege of butchering one another in honour of the God of peace? Infatuated men! know your brethren. Your differences are merely accidental. A different education, or a small change in external circumstances, would have set each of you on the side opposite to that on which he now appears. And ye may depend upon it, that even in that case, the alteration in you would not have been material. It would have been more apparent than real, more in garb than in character. Ye are essentially one, actuated in every respect by the same spirit.

Is there then such a thing as Christian zeal? And if there be, how shall we distinguish it, that we may not, like the two disciples, mistake our motive, and imagine ourselves zealous, when we are only proud and vindictive? There is such a thing as Christian zeal; and it is easily distinguished. Being the offspring of knowledge, and nourished by love, its great object is inward purity: To distinctions merely exterior it pays little regard. There is in it an ardour for the truth, not that men may be either allured or terrified into a verbal profession of what they do not in their hearts believe, (the grossest insult that can be offered to truth) but that they may attain a rational conviction. The interests of truth itself it desires to promote for a still further end; that by means of it, love may be kindled both to God and man: that by means of it, temperance, and justice, and piety, and peace, may flourish on the earth. A man thus minded, will not sacrifice the end to the means; nor do a false, unjust, or cruel action, even for the sake of truth itself. The

* John iv. 22.

persecutor (supposing all worldly motives totally excluded) is at best, in the eye of true zeal, one who, for the sake of the form of godliness, would extirpate its power, and trample all that is most sacred and valuable among men.

To Christian zeal let us contrast the zeal of sectarism. Perhaps it will be needful to explain the term. Any person who has entered into my sentiments, will not misunderstand me so far, as to suppose, that I mean to throw an oblique reflection on sects which have not the advantage of a legal establishment. I know the word is sometimes used in this illiberal way. But a man who has a just notion of the dignity of religion, is incapable of the meanness of piquing himself on a circumstance merely secular and local, which may as readily favour, and does as frequently support error as truth; the grossest superstition, or the wildest fanaticism, as the purest and most reasonable worship. I mean, then, by the zeal of sectarism in any person, that ardour, which, attending chiefly to party-distinctions, seeks to increase the number of retainers to that sect, established by law or unestablished, (the word is applicable to both) to which he himself happens to be attached. Every judicious man will frankly own, that a zeal of this kind sometimes appears in characters where there never appeared a spark of zeal for the conversion of a soul from sin to God; for that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, which are the ornaments of our nature, the fruits of the Spirit *, and the glory of the Christian name. I do not say, that these two kinds are never united. I know the contrary. But I say, they are often separate; and that therefore there is no necessary connection between them. As to the former, who were more remarkable for the sectarian zeal than the Pharisees, that compassed sea and land to make one proselyte? Whether they had an equal share in the latter kind, let the sequel of the account declare. They made him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves †. And in modern times, you will find, in that communion or sect which can boast a legal establishment in most kingdoms of Europe, perhaps more zealots on the Pharisaic model than could be collected out of all the other communions. In fact, this zeal is but a species of party-

* Gal. v. 22, 23. † Matth. xxiii. 15.

spirit at the most. If a community be divided into factions, whatever be the ground of division (it may be different systems in politics, different theories in philosophy, as well as differences in religion) it is natural for every party-man to wish to augment the number of his party. Every additional suffrage is imagined to add something in confirmation of his own judgment. This principle operates on religious parties more strongly from the conceived importance of the subject.

If, added to this, there be any of those violent prejudices, which are so easily infused and cherished in a weak understanding, and contracted temper, there results that most unlovely form we call *bigotry*, which would fain pass herself on the world for zeal, but in disposition has no more resemblance to her, than superstition bears to religion, or the hatred of man, to the love of God. We have already taken notice of their difference in nature and origin. With regard to the effects, we may say, they are not only dissimilar, but in some things opposite; insomuch, that our mistaking the one for the other is even matter of astonishment. The object of the first is the form, of the second the power, of godliness. The means they employ are extremely unlike. Bigotry persecutes: Zeal persuades. The former, where she cannot exterminate, will create division. She has a bitterness of spirit that cannot brook opposition in the merest trifle. She will not associate with those who cannot conform in every thing to her humour. A mote she magnifies into a mole-heap, and a mole-heap into a mountain. At once jealous and inflexible, and consequently of a temper the reverse of that of the peace-maker, she is ever discovering reason for making a breach where there is none, and for widening it where it has unluckily been made. The latter, in all these particulars, acts a contrary part. Candid in judging, and warmed with kindness, she always aims at union, assiduously promoting peace. She understands the import of moderation and mutual forbearance, and can cordially receive as brethren persons who differ in some sentiments; avoiding matters of doubtful disputation, and whatever might prove a cause of stumbling to the weak. In brief, as zeal is constantly attended and inspired by Charity, she may at all times be distinguished by the company of her amiable friend. This last you cannot fail to know, if

you attend to the picture that has been drawn of her by the masterly hand of our apostle, in the most inimitable colours *. Who, on the other hand, is the most intimate companion of bigotry, let the uncharitable judgments, malignity, and calumny, for which she is so remarkable, declare. The impartial must see, and the charitable will lament, the envenomed misrepresentations which, to the detriment of the common cause, the bigotted of every denomination give of the opinions and practices of every other.

I observed that one great engine of false zeal is division. It will be worth while to consider this more particularly, and inquire into that factitious spirit which has so much infested the Christian world, to the great scandal of the friends, and the no small triumph of the enemies, of religion. People are commonly ingenious enough to devise excuses for what is the natural result of the worst passions of their frame. Let us fairly canvass those pleas which are generally used on this subject.—One is, the danger of contracting impurity by an intermixture with the impure. The argument of such advocates for separation is justly represented by the prophet; *Stand by thyself; come not near to me; for I am holier than thou* †. There are two things (I speak to the authors and promoters of division, whoever they be) of which ye would need to be ascertained, before ye introduce strife and dissension among those who live in unity; knowing, that where these are, there is confusion, and every evil work ‡. The first thing I would have you be assured of is, that ye have truth on your side. It is not every specious deduction by inference from Scripture, that ought to be put on the same footing with those doctrines which are clearly revealed there. I know that all bigots are equally dogmatical on every point. And it is not difficult to account for this. They hold all their opinions by the same tenure of implicit faith. But no discerning person, no one who is properly capable of forming a judgment, ever pretended, that there was for every opinion equal evidence. If the apostle of the Gentiles may be credited, there are even in religion matters of doubtful disputation, which ought never to disturb the harmony of Christians, much less make a rent in their communion §. The se-

* 1 Cor. xiii. † Isa. lxv. 5. ‡ James iii. 16. § Rom. xiv.

cond thing of which ye would need to be well informed is, that the ground of separation be a matter of importance. The consequences of a breach are important, and the cause would need to be proportionate. 'But is not every point important that 'concerns religion?' Admitted. Yet we have the best authority to affirm, that there are weightier and less weighty matters of the law *. Nay more, as was hinted already, we are authorised to affirm, that there are points regarding religion, about which, though we differ in judgment, we ought not to divide.

Some have, very weakly in my opinion, introduced the example of the primitive Christians in separating from Jews and Pagans, as furnishing a good defence of separation among Christians from one another. Concerning the former, it is alleged, that the circumstance which most incensed their enemies against them, was, that they would admit no inter-community with those of other religions, that is, say they, with those who did not perfectly concur with them in their religious sentiments. There is a misunderstanding here which I shall endeavour to unravel. The matter well deserves to be traced from the beginning.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not only himself attend the service in the synagogue every Sabbath, and in the temple on the solemn festivals, but commanded his disciples to do the same: *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Whatsoever therefore they bid you observe, that observe, and do* †. Yet it is well known, that our Lord had some exceptions to their doctrine, as well as to their lives. The conduct of his apostles, and his other followers of the Jewish nation, continued, in this, after his ascension, to be conformable to his example and instructions. They punctually attended both the synagogue-worship ‡ and the temple-service §, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, notwithstanding that the nation had openly rejected and crucified the Messiah. Their maxim was, that whereto they had attained, they should walk by the same rule ‖. Both Jews and Christians had attained to the know-

* Matth. xxiii. 23. † Matth. xxiii. 3.
‡ Acts ix. 20.; xiii. 5, 14, &c.; xiv. 1.; xvii. 1, 2, 17.; xviii. 4.
§ Acts ii. 46.; iii. 1.; xxi. 26.; xxii. 17.; xxiv. 18.
‖ Phil. iii. 16.

ledge of one God, a spirit of infinite perfection; and the latter found nothing unsuitable in the practice of concurring with the former, in adoring their common Creator, and in hearing those Scriptures read, which both sides admitted to be divinely inspired; though sometimes the reading was accompanied with explications which Christians could not approve. Nor does it appear, that they desisted from this conformity, till the Jews, by a sentence of excommunication, compelled them to desist, as our Lord had predicted *. Were we to examine this conduct by modern ideas, I am afraid the apostles themselves would not escape the charge of latitudinarian. But, in those times, separation, in the way now practised, was a thing utterly unknown. Few sects of Christians differ so widely in their principles, as the Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews did; yet it deserves our notice, that both attended worship in the same temple, and in the same synagogues. Neither of them became separatists, in the sense in which the word is understood amongst us.

Even the Christians themselves were not wholly without diversity of opinions in the apostolic age. The grand question which first occupied them was about the Mosaic ceremonies †. This point was determined at Jerusalem, in a convention of the apostles, elders, and brethren, by a resolve alike moderate and judicious ‡. With regard to the Jewish converts, there was no dispute. They had been in the use hitherto of giving the same punctual obedience to the rites of the law, since their conversion to Christianity, as before. And there was no new injunction given them now; they were left entirely to their freedom. As to the Gentile brethren §, about whom alone the debate was started, they were required only to abstain from a few things, which were particularly scandalous to the Jews; and in other respects were declared free from any obligation to the observance of the Mosaic institution. There was, it would appear, in that assembly, none of those violent sticklers for uniformity, so common in after times, when men's zeal began to fix on the exterior part only. I cannot help observing by the way, that those who are vested with the most undoubt-

* John xvi. 2.
† Acts xv. 1.
‡ Acts xv. 6, &c.
§ Acts xix. 23, &c.

ed title to authority, are generally more moderate in the use of it, than those whose power is questionable at least, if not usurped. In consequence of this judgment, both Jewish and Gentile disciples lived in full-communion together as Christians, notwithstanding that the one set observed a multitude of rites not minded by the other.

The matter did not rest here. Several Jewish brethren, who had the most enlarged views of the gospel-dispensation, began, when they were among Gentiles, and not in hazard of scandalizing their countrymen, to omit observing the legal rites altogether. Others, of weaker minds, and narrower views, could not surmount the scruple of abandoning customs which from their infancy they had been taught to revere *. In neither of these classes was there any disobedience to the decree given at Jerusalem, which did not ordain any thing with regard to the Jewish proselytes, and by its silence did indeed permit, but not command, them to retain their ceremonies. There was a third class, who, in open defiance of that decree, maintained the indispensable necessity of circumcision to salvation; and, consequently wanted to writhe this yoke about the necks of all the Gentile converts. It is worth while to observe the different manner in which Paul treated these different classes.

With the first he concurred in opinion: at the same time he enjoined them, not to say or do any thing that might be offensive to the weak, who were those of the second class; insisting, that there were opinions which, though true, were not of that consequence, that we ought to endanger the interests of charity by an unseasonable display of them. What tenderness does he not show even to the errors of those who, though weakly scrupulous, were truly conscientious? This topic he has touched occasionally in almost all his writings; but he has fully discussed it in the epistle to the Romans †; and in such a manner, that it would be impossible to say, whether the spirit of love, or of a sound mind, shines forth most conspicuously in the discussion.

The third class he treats in a very different manner; and strains every nerve to detect their sophistry, and prevent their

* Acts xxi. 20. † Chap. xiv.

influence. Was it that the Jewish rites were worse than any other? No: But it was because that doctrine, which made the favour of Heaven depend on mere ceremonies, was totally subversive of the spirit of the gospel. And such the doctrine of the Judaizing teachers evidently was. *Except ye be circumcised*, said they, *after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved* *. Nothing could be more contradictory to all the rational and generous sentiments which the gospel of Jesus inspires, than this slavish and superstitious tenet. We have seen already, that no man could make, or require others to make, greater allowances than he did for the observances of those very rites, when that observance did not proceed from this absurd principle: a principle which tended at once to degrade in our conceptions the divine Majesty, to pervert the natural sense which God has given us of right and wrong, and to shake at least, if not overturn, the doctrine of our reconciliation by Jesus. The apostle, then, was sensible of the difference between truth and importance even in religious matters.

Without distinguishing these several classes, we shall never be able to perceive the consistency of the apostle's conduct on this head. When he says at one time, *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing* †; which plainly implies, that we are neither the better nor the worse for submitting to this ceremony: and at another, as he did to the Galatians on whom the Judaizing teachers had made an impression, *If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing* ‡; it must be owned there is in these an apparent inconsistency. It may be plausibly urged against him, if all we have by Christ shall be forfeited by our receiving this seal of Judaism, and subjecting ourselves to the yoke of the law, why did Paul himself, after his conversion, circumcise Timothy §. Why did he, when he was among the Jews, live agreeably to the ordinances of the law, and, along with others, go through the ceremonies of purification in the temple ‖ for the discharge of a vow ¶? Why doth

* Acts xv. 1. † 1 Cor. vii. 19. ‡ Gal. v. 2.
§ Acts xvi. 1, &c. ‖ Acts xxi. 26.

¶ I know that some have censured the apostle for this step, and considered it as a culpable compliance with an advice which savoured too much of the wisdom of the world. The bad success of this expedient they look on as a pro-

he treat the distinction of days, and of meats, and the other legal observances, as matters of indifference, and enjoin on all sides mutual forbearance on these articles *? It will be impossible, in a satisfactory manner, to answer these questions, without admitting the distinction above explained. From the whole, however, it is indisputable, that there was not among Christians a perfect unanimity on every point, even in the apostolic age; that, notwithstanding this, they lived in harmony and unity, and in full communion with one another, as became brethren in Christ.

That the church had no inter-community in sacred matters with idolaters, is indeed equally incontestible. Is there then, say modern sectaries, no sufficient ground, except idolatry, for breaking off from all fellowship in religious matters? That idolatrous worship is a sufficient reason (whether the community from which we separate be called Christian or not) there can be no question. That it is the only reason, I do not say. If, as a condition of communion, a positive assent to opinions, or approbation of practices, were required, which we could not give without falsehood, this also would be a sufficient ground. It can never be our duty to lie or dissemble. I do not say, that these are all the just grounds of separation; though I cannot at present recollect any other. But this I do say, that where it is once made on Christian grounds, it is much oftener the effect of pride and passion.

vidential rebuke for temporizing. I am not satisfied of the justice of this censure, for the following reasons. 1. Our apostle being of the Jewish nation, was evidently at liberty to use the ceremonies, if he pleased. 2. Though he expressly declares them not available to salvation, he never pronounces them either unlawful or inexpedient for those who were Jews, by birth. 3. He avows it to be his ordinary method, among the Jews, to live as a Jew. (I Cor. ix. 20.) 4. If Paul had not previously had a vow, and during its continuance observed the abstinences prescribed by the law, can it be imagined, that one who had any regard to piety or truth, would have either advised or consented to such dissimulation in a solemn act of religion? 5. That he actually had a vow, and observed the precept relating to it, when he had no temptation to temporize, is evident from Acts xviii. 18. 6. That the bad success of this expedient should be construed as a rebuke from Heaven, is a supposition as arbitrary, as it would be to affirm, that when Peter was beaten by order of the Sanhedrim, this should be interpreted as a divine reproof for his teaching in the temple, where he had been apprehended.

* Rom. xiv.

Allow me to ask, on the other hand, Is there no danger from separation? Is it of no consequence, think ye, to increase so epidemical an evil? Paul thought not so lightly of the matter, when he so warmly checked the first motions of this spirit in the Corinthians, though it had no appearance of creating an open rupture *. Is Christ, the head, divided, that ye make so little account of disjoining the members? or is each sect arrogant enough to appropriate him to themselves? Is there no danger of giving to your several leaders the honour which belongs only to your Lord? Was any of those teachers crucified for you; or were ye baptized in his name? It is but too evident, whatever ye may pretend, that ye *do* call men *Rabbi*, and *Father*; that ye *do* admit other masters than Christ, to whose several dictates and glosses ye are blindly devoted. Ye do not say indeed, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas; but ye have gotten names much less respectable, which ye substitute in their place. When such contentions subsist amongst you, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? Is not your conduct more influenced by the passions of the men of this world, than by the example and maxims of Christ?

To set this matter in another light: Is there no danger of wounding charity, the end of the commandment, and the bond of perfectness? Is there no danger of narrowing the sphere of that brotherly love, which every disciple of Jesus owes to every other? Is there no danger that ye vitiate your own temper; that your minds rankle against your brethren; that from attending too close to what ye judge faulty in them, ye come at length to be incapable of discovering any good in them at all? This is but too common a progress. The mind, uneasy under an antipathy of which it is become unable to get rid, casts about for means to justify it. These it will never be difficult to find, when one is in the humour of seeking for them. Every ill is then exaggerated, and every good misconstrued. It is the character of charity, that it thinketh no evil †. In the track we would warn you against, ye are almost sure of contracting an intimacy with her antagonist, malice, which thinketh no good. Were there no danger of these things, it is not your preferring other pastors, or even some differences in opinion and external

* 1 Cor. i. 11, &c.; iii. 3, &c. † 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

order, that should ever have induced me to use a single expostulation on the subject.

It was the remark of a late witty author, that 'we have religion enough to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another *.' The fact is but too generally experienced. Yet when we consider the remark, it must at first appear a paradox. For if the perfection of religion would produce the perfection of love, surely a less degree of the former should produce a less degree of the latter; but that it should produce hatred, which is the opposite of love, seems inconceivable. The riddle, however, upon attention, is easily solved. The religion that produces hatred, will not be found to differ only in degree from that which produces love, but in spirit and in kind. When therefore, from what we call religion, we feel such an effect upon our minds, we have but too great reason to suspect, that we have more of the sectary than of the Christian in us, and that our religion has in it more of the false, than of the true; that our zeal is bigotry, and our supreme regards no better than a dotage about questions and strifes of words, vain janglings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.

But there is something more here than has been yet accounted for. Weak judgment and ungovernable passions may give rise to those differences that breed division; but when sects are once formed, political causes co-operate in producing that malignity which they so commonly bear to one another. It becomes in some respect the interest or credit of their respective leaders, to keep the party together. No method is so effectual for attaining this end, as to magnify every point on which they differ from others, as of the utmost consequence, and to make the whole attention of their adherents centre there. Others are represented as being in the high road of perdition. For this purpose every passage in Scripture about heathens and idolaters is miserably wrested, that it may appear intended for their neighbours of other sects. These are sometimes Pharisees and Sadducees, sometimes publicans and sinners, and always *They that are without.* For any of their own fraternity occasionally to join in worship with those of another party, is no better than *bowing the knee to Baal:* For they themselves only

* Swift.

are *the small remnant, the elect, the little flock;* and, exactly in the spirit of Judaism, they think God has no concern about all the world besides. Nothing can equal the dogmatism and arrogance with which one sect pronounces sentence against another, except perhaps the dogmatism and arrogance with which that other retaliates upon them. If this policy have in it of the wisdom of the serpent, it is not in conjunction with the innocence of the dove. If it have the wisdom of the serpent, it has his venom too. It has not the signature of the wisdom that is from above, which is *pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy* *. On the contrary, earthly in its nature, and devilish in its tendency, it is at best but the subtlety of the old serpent, who beguiled Eve, who has contributed so much to extirpate love from the earth, and to sow the seeds of discord in its stead.

In what words shall I address those simple ones, who allow themselves to be deceived by so ill-disguised an artifice? If one of the parties in any common quarrel, should, after telling you his story, insist with you not to hear his adversary, whom he abuses very liberally, assuring you that he would only mislead your judgment; could you entertain a favourable idea of that man's cause? If ye were constituted judges in it, would ye be in this manner induced to give your decision without hearing both sides? Are ye silly enough, then, to be gulled in regard to religion, a matter wherein ye yourselves are so deeply concerned, by a trick so poor, that it could not impose on a person of common sense in the most trifling occurrence? Have ye eyes? Look around you. Do ye not perceive hundreds, nay thousands, seduced by the very same methods, into sentiments opposite to yours, and made to entertain as horrid a notion of you as it is possible for you to entertain of them? Ye are certain that they are deluded; and they are certain that ye are deluded; and both have equal reason. Ought not this to make you suspect an expedient, which ye must acknowledge is so often used successfully in the cause of error? Properly in that cause only. For is it, I pray you, vice or virtue that shuns the light? Is it truth or falsehood that declines an open trial? Rea-

* James iii. 17.

son will tell you, your Lord and Master will tell you *, (for ye still call him Master and Lord,) that it is vice and falsehood. But if his word had half the weight with you that the verdicts of your Rabbies have, ye could not be imposed on by such a contemptible piece of priestcraft. Perhaps ye are of a party (for I know there are such parties) which holds the name of *priest* in abhorrence, which detests the term *clergy*, and all other titles of that stamp. It may be so. Words are but sounds, and ye may be violently attached to the thing, in whatever way ye stand affected to the name. Does any one claim or exercise a dominion over the faith of others? That man is a *priest* in the most odious sense the word bears. Does he support his claim by anathematizing those who do not acknowledge it? He avails himself of one of the most execrable, though at the same time one of the commonest, engines of priestcraft. 'But 'who,' say ye, 'claims any such dominion? We know them 'not.' I will tell you them. Who ever says, either in so many words, or in what is equivalent, 'Be guided by me only, and 'such as concur with me in their opinions; but on the peril of 'damnation hear no other;' that man claims it, whoever he be. It is he that assumes the title of *Rabbi*, that chooses to be called Master and Father upon earth, and thus usurps the office of his Lord. As *his* account only of the doctrine of Jesus is heard by you, as *his* explications only are regarded, as *his* solutions only of every doubt are admitted, ye are Christians just so far, and of such a form, as it pleases him ye should be; ye inadvertently constitute him umpire over your Master himself, and become much more properly his followers than the followers of Christ.

Would it be thought credible, if experience did not vouch the fact, that a policy, covered by so thin a disguise, could prove successful; an antiquated and stale device, employed alike by men of the most repugnant sentiments and opposite interests; a device which carries the suspicious mark of conscious weakness in the front of it? One thing, however, truth compels me to urge in excuse for those who employ these secluding, damning, and terrifying methods. It is a case of necessity with them. The party cannot dispense with these arts. Rob them

* John iii. 20, 21.

of this defence, and they are undone. If you examine impartially, you will soon be satisfied, that no cause ever yet had recourse to such base shifts, which could be supported by any better.

I cannot forbear, whether I am heard or not, addressing a few words to those presumptuous men, who thus consign each other to damnation for not agreeing with them in opinion on every article. It is for your own sakes I speak; for with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by man's judgment. Thou callest thyself a disciple of Jesus. Hast thou no regard to the commandment of thy Lord? Or has he given a more express commandment than this? *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again* *. Does not he on whom thou darest to sit in judgment, profess to be a disciple of Jesus as well as thou? Whether he be really so or not, is another's affair, and not thine. *Who art thou*, says Paul, *that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth* †. Besides, is there not one appointed judge of all the earth? and darest thou usurp his office? *Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ* ‡. *There is one lawgiver*, says the apostle James, *who is able to save and to destroy: Who art thou that judgest another* §? In every view this practice is condemned. It is fraught with danger to yourselves, with injury to your neighbour, and with impiety to your Lord.

Nothing is more common with polemic writers, than to complain of the pride of those who impugn their theories. It requires no great penetration to discern, that the pride of the writer is the source of the complaint. The charge is commonly reciprocal, and just on both sides. Would you know which is the proudest? You will not mistake the matter greatly in concluding, that it is he who on this topic makes the loudest clamour. But of all the species of pride and presumption that have ever yet appeared, it is certainly the most extravagant, for

* Matth. vii. 1, 2.
† Rom. xiv. 4.
‡ Rom. xiv. 10.
§ James v. 12.

a puny mortal, the insect of a day, a reptile of the dust, to arrogate the prerogative of omniscience, to ascend the throne of the Most High, and to point the thunders of almighty power. Is it to be wondered, that such a disposition should produce a spirit of persecution? It would be miraculous if it did not. Can the man who does not hesitate to usurp one function of omnipotence, hesitate to usurp another? Would he who scruples not to pronounce sentence, scruple to execute it, if it were in his power? Yes, upon reflection, I am persuaded, that the far greater part of those blind zealots themselves would stop here. We are however too amply warranted by experience to say at least, that they will not scruple to consign him to a stake in this world, whom they do not scruple, in their usurped capacity of judges, to consign to hell-fire in the next.

We sometimes hear much of Antichrist amongst our controvertists. Who is Antichrist? It is an usurper, who, under pretence of honouring Christ, supplants him, perverting the power he has assumed to the seduction of the disciples *. We have seen already, that in the political artifices we have been combating, there is a double usurpation of the prerogatives of our Lord, both as the only infallible instructor of his people, and as the supreme judge of the world. This is therefore that malign spirit of Antichrist, whose baleful influences have, alas! been but too widely diffused, to the unspeakable hurt of that godlike charity, without which, with all our pretensions to faith, and zeal, and knowledge, we are at best but sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals †.

What then shall we say of those who differ from us in important articles? What shall we say? That, in our judgment, they err, not knowing the Scriptures. What more should we say? It belongs to the Omniscient, the searcher of hearts, and to him only, to say whether their error, if they be in an error, proceeds from pravity of disposition, or from causes in which the will had no share. Is it for us to determine, how much wood, and hay, and stubble, may be reared up on the only foundation, Jesus Christ? Though the foreign materials, by the apostle's account, will be consumed in the fiery trial they must undergo, yet the builder himself will be saved ‡. We

* 2 Thess. ii. 3, &c. † 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 15.

are ever, like Peter, turning aside from the point in hand, (which is what immediately concerns ourselves) and, by a curiosity much less justifiable than his, inquiring, what will become of this man? When such a question arises in thy mind, O my fellow-Christian, think thou hearest the voice of thy divine Master, checking thy impertinence in the words addressed to the apostle, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me* *?

IV. I proceed now, in the *last* place, to make some reflections on what has been advanced.

1. First, I observe, That though the spirit of true religion, and the spirit of false, be not only different, but opposite, there may nevertheless be a portion of each in the same disposition. Man has been said, not unjustly, to be a mass of contradictions. The union just now mentioned, however incongruous, is not more so, than that of vice and virtue, truth and error, which though equally opposite, are often blended in the same character. From the specimen we have seen of the false zeal in two of the disciples, it would be unjust to conclude, that they were then totally unacquainted with true religion. Instances may be supposed, and have actually happened, in which the genuine spirit of the gospel has powerfully rested in the mind, and happily overcome the motions of a misguided zeal, derived from a superstitious or fanatical education. Examples might no doubt be produced of a victory on the other side, when the influence of early prejudices deeply and firmly rooted, has, on a particular occasion, misled one to act a part extremely unsuitable to the real piety and benevolence which have uniformly shone in the rest of his conduct. How far the plea of a misinformed conscience will go in extenuation of the crimes it occasions, it belongs not to us, but to the great judge of all the earth, to determine.

If, then, there appear evident marks of superstition or enthusiasm in a character, let us not conclude, that all must be false, that there can be nothing there of true religion, or the spirit of the gospel.—If there be an evident mixture of both, let us not conclude, that there must be a natural affinity between true religion and false. A due attention to what has been said,

* John xxi. 22.

will satisfy us, that both ways of arguing are absolutely untenable.

2. I observe, secondly, That, from the spirit of the party, we cannot always infer with justice what spirit predominates in an individual belonging to that party. In what sects that were not idolatrous did there ever appear more of superstition, rancour, and furious zeal, than among the Pharisees and the Samaritans? Yet in both, our Saviour, who knew what was in man *, found persons to whom he could give an honourable testimony; persons too who were not in every thing superior to popular opinions and party-prejudices. That the apostles themselves had not attained this superiority till about the time of their Lord's ascension, is manifest from the question they put to him after his resurrection, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel* †? Both the above observations ought to teach us modesty in the opinions we form of men's characters.

It has been remarked already, that some principles are in their nature and origin superstitious. Such is the opinion which a late eminent writer ‡ remarks to prevail among the Indians, that the water of the Ganges has a sanctifying virtue; and that the dead whose ashes are thrown into it, are secured of an admission into Elysium. 'What matters it,' says he, 'whether one lives virtuously or not? He can order his body 'to be thrown into the Ganges.' Are absurdities of this kind peculiar to Paganism? Are there not some European countries in which men may say with equal reason, 'What matters it 'how one lives? He can on his death-bed obtain the viaticum.' And by their doctrine of sacraments, it is even of no consequence whether the dying man be sensible of what is done, or insensible. It is manifest, that these two dogmas are materially the same; they differ only in the form.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that there are no religious institutions, how pure soever, which may not be superstitiously or fanatically used. A minister's conversing with the sick on the hope of the gospel, and joining with them in prayer, are duties which, when properly performed, have a na-

* John ii. 25. † Acts i. 6.

‡ De l'esprit des Loix, liv. 24. ch. 14.

tural tendency to prove solacing and instructive to the distressed, to the spectators, and to the minister himself. But if any person be absurd enough to consider the prayer of a minister, at the bedside of one in the agonies of death, as a passport to heaven, his sentiments do not differ essentially from theirs who rely on extreme unction, or the priest's absolution, as the grand security.

3. I observe, thirdly, That that set of opinions and practices is the most dangerous, which looks with the malignest aspect on love, and tends most to contract its circle. The sectarian spirit has inverted the rule laid down by our Lord, which was, to judge of teachers and their doctrines by their fruits *. The method now almost universally followed, is, to judge of their fruits by their doctrines. If these be not to our taste, the other cannot be good; if these receive our approbation, the other must be very bad ere they displease us. Every sect has its own *Shibboleth*. One inquires about opinions; another, about ceremonies; a third, about ecclesiastical polity and hierarchy, proposing, as the sole authentic evidence of our being Christians, the examination of certain endless genealogies; as if Christ had intended that all his disciples should be antiquaries; because otherwise they could not have the satisfaction to know whether they were his disciples or not. Unfortunately for these people, all such spiritual pedigrees are so miserably lame, that if their rule were to be admitted, we should be involved in darkness on this subject, from which no antiquary could extricate us; and there would not remain the slightest evidence that there were a single Christian on the earth. We shall however be satisfied with Paul's rule on this subject, who enjoins every man, in order to make this important discovery with regard to himself, carefully to examine his own heart †.

Strange indeed, that none of these curious tests have been recommended to us by Christ, in order to direct us in the choice of teachers. Still more strange, that all sects should, as it were by general consent, overlook the only rule he gave on this subject. He did not enjoin the examination of captious questions, disputes often about words and phrases. He knew how unfit the bulk of mankind are for discussions of this sort. His rule

* Matth. vii. 15, &c. † 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

is level to the capacity of all, and probably for this reason has been so little regarded. Teachers and doctrines are to be distinguished by their fruits. That doctrine is the soundest, which has the happiest influence on the temper and lives of those who receive it; which operates most powerfully by love to God, and love to man. That, on the contrary, is to be deemed the worst, which has the unhappiest influence on the temper and life. We do not therefore send you to the inextricable mazes of disputation and logomachy, but to the only infallible test which Christ himself has given us. It will not, sure, be imagined, that we mean, like the too narrow-minded disciple, to forbid any man to cast out devils in the name of Christ, because *he followeth not with us* *. But we mean to warn every man against the influence of that teacher who would cast in devils in the name of Christ, whether he follow with us or not. For we know no worse devils than contention, bitterness, spiritual pride, uncharitable judgments, detraction, malevolence. We mean further, if possible, to abate the rancour of sects towards one another, and to make the interests of charity surmount that worst species of priestly policy which but too much abounds in them all.

4. I remark, fourthly, That some of the strongest objections of infidels do not properly affect the gospel; they affect only the corruptions which have been introduced by men into this divine religion. It may be added, that the same adventitious materials have been the foundation of the greater part of the controversies among Christians themselves.

To conclude: Let us, my Honoured Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry, think of the particular obligations we are brought under by the trust reposed in us, of recommending, both by doctrine and by example, the genuine spirit of the gospel. There is not a community, any more than an individual, that is absolutely perfect; but perfection ought ever to be the aim of both. It is not our having the advantage of a legal establishment that will secure us against the temper of sectaries, though I can say with truth, that in my judgment (I may indeed be partial) there will not easily be found a Christian society that has less of that temper. In a contagion so universal, it is

* Mark ix. 38.; Luke ix. 49.

hardly possible to escape entirely being infected. Let this consideration makes us the more on our guard, that we may purge out the old leaven, and be a new lump in the Lord. Let us never descend to the unchristian artifice of ingratiating ourselves by traducing others. Still less let us think of the antichristian arrogance of usurping the office of the supreme Judge, and pronouncing the eternal doom of those who differ from us. Nay, where we know we meet with this treatment from others, let us abhor the thought of retaliating; imitating rather the conduct of our Lord, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. Let our great policy, for influencing those of other communions, be, to show forth in every thing, the meekness, the gentleness, the moderation of Christ. If attracted by that spirit which the apostle styles, *the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*, prevailing in the tempers and lives of our people, as the happy fruits of our teaching, candid and reasonable men shall be induced to give us the preference, the victory will be to our honour; and we are sure that the heart of the proselyte will not be corrupted by the change. We cannot say so much when men are gained to any party, by the too common arts of infusing bigotry and rancour. But still such an external connection is comparatively a small matter. Those who are not gained in this sense, may nevertheless be gained to love and purity, to more enlarged sentiments of the unbounded grace of Jesus, and thus may be improved by our example. Let us therefore invariably follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

THE SUCCESS OF THE FIRST PUBLISHERS OF THE GOSPEL, A PROOF OF ITS TRUTH:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING,

EDINBURGH, FRIDAY, JUNE 6th, 1777.

EDINBURGH, JUNE 6th, 1777.

At a General Meeting of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge,

RESOLVED,

That the thanks of this Society be given to the Reverend Dr. Campbell, for his excellent Sermon preached this day before them; and that he be desired to permit the same to be printed for the use of the Society.

JAMES FORREST, *Clerk.*

SERMON II.

1 Cor. i. 25.——*The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*,

It would scarcely be possible to conceive a new religion attended with more disadvantageous circumstances than was the Christian religion on its first appearance; and of which, consequently, the success in the world would, humanly speaking, be more improbable. Nothing could be worse adapted to the prejudices that prevailed among Jews and Gentiles than its tenets: Nothing could be less accommodated to the universal depravity of manners than its precepts. Both the obscurity and the fate of its Founder seemed alike insuperable obstacles to the advancement of his cause. And as to the persons whom, under the title of Apostles, he selected to be the instruments of promulging his doctrine, they were such as, in the judgment of all reasonable men, would have been sufficient, though every other circumstance had been favourable, to render the scheme abortive. Truly, therefore, may we say, that if this counsel or this work had been of men, it must have come to nought. Any one of the particulars above mentioned would have been enough to stifle it in the birth; how much more would all of them when combined together? But *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord* *. His *thoughts are not* our *thoughts, neither are* our *ways* his *ways*. Justly is this divine institution represented in the prophetic language under the emblem of *a stone*, something at first to appearance inconsiderable, *cut out without hands*, not by human skill or dexterity, *which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth* †. For *the foolishness of God*, as ye have it in the passage read to you as the foundation of this discourse, *is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

* Prov. xxi. 30. † Dan. ii. 34, 35.

The apostle, in these words, is far from insinuating that there can be any thing in the supreme all-perfect mind analogous to what we understand by the terms *folly* and *weakness*. But, by an usual figure, he considers the extraordinary conduct of Providence manifested in this new institution, under the denomination which the adversaries were pleased to give it; and affirms, that the measures which the Ruler of the world had adopted, and which to them were foolishness, would be found to have more wisdom in them than the wisest plans of human contrivance; and that the means employed by Heaven, however weak they might be reckoned, would be strong enough to baffle all the most vigorous efforts of the sons of earth. Nay more, however shallow the measures, and however impotent the instruments may be, not in appearance but in reality, when attended only by natural and ordinary means, they will prove perfectly efficacious when attended by such as are supernatural and extraordinary. God, when he is pleased to interpose miraculously, can effect his purpose not only without the intervention of man, but by such human agency as seems better calculated to defeat the end than to promote it. This, we learn from the context, was, in several important respects, the case with the first promulgation of the gospel.

To throw light on this doctrine, and to point out the use we ought to make of it, shall, with the aid of Heaven, be the ultimate scope of this discourse. The argument couched in my text, and illustrated in the concluding part of this chapter, and the beginning of the next, may be thus expressed: "The human and natural means originally employed for the propagation of the gospel, would, without the divine interposition, have proved both foolish and weak, and therefore utterly incapable of answering the purpose. The purpose was nevertheless by these means fully answered. Consequently they must have been accompanied with the divine interposition, and our religion is of God, and not of man." I shall first therefore endeavour to evince the truth of the first proposition, and show the utter inability of the natural means employed in promulgating the gospel, to effect the end. I shall next evince the truth of the second, pointing out the rapid and unexampled success of the means that were employed;—and shall conclude with ob-

serving the influence which the obvious consequence of these deductions ought to have upon us, and the improvement we ought to make of this doctrine.

I BEGIN with the unfitness of the means, that is, the natural and ordinary means, admitted by infidels, as well as Christians, to have been employed; for it is of such means only I am here speaking. Let it be observed, that under this I comprehend the genius of the doctrine taught; because, whether supernatural in its origin or not, it may have in it a natural fitness for engaging attention and regard, or, on the contrary, a natural tendency to alienate the minds of men, and render them inattentive and averse. In this view, the spirit and character of the institution itself ought to be regarded as natural means, either of promoting, or of retarding, its propagation. Let us then examine briefly the two principal circumstances already suggested, the doctrine and the publishers. It is to the former that the term *foolishness* is more especially applied, as *weakness* is to the latter.

The doctrine of the cross, in particular, the great hinge of all, was, in every view, exposed to universal dislike and derision. Considered as an article of faith in this new religion, as exhibiting the expiation of sin, and consequently as the foundation of the sinner's hope of divine pardon and acceptance, to men principled as they were, it both shocked their understanding, and was humiliating to their pride. Considered as a practical lesson, and a warning of the treatment which the disciples might expect, when such horrible things had befallen their master, to follow whom in suffering they were specially called, nothing could tend more powerfully to alienate their will, being opposed by all their most rooted passions, love of life, aversion to pain, and horror of infamy. And even considered only as a memorable event in the history of him whom all the proselytes to this institution were bound to acknowledge as their lawgiver and king, it was exceedingly disgustful, being contradictory to all the notions to which from infancy they had been habituated, in regard to the protection of Providence, and the marks whereby Heaven distinguishes its favourites destined for honour and authority.

Paul, accordingly, takes particular notice of the bad reception which this doctrine met with from both Jews and Gentiles, in consequence of the inveterate prejudices entertained against it. *The preaching of the cross*, says he, *is to them that perish*, to them who reject and despise the gospel, *foolishness; but to us who are saved*, who by faith give it a grateful reception, *it is the power of God* *. However much the Jews and the Greeks differed from each other, in their religious principles, as well as customs, they concurred in a most hearty detestation of this, which made so fundamental an article of the Christian dispensation. They viewed it differently, according to their different national characters; but the effect, an indignant rejection, was the same in both. Our apostle, who perfectly understood the difference, has marked it with the greatest accuracy. *The Jews require a sign*, an evidence of the interposition of Omnipotence, which may overpower their minds, and command an unlimited assent; *and the Greeks seek after wisdom*, the elaborate productions of oratory and ingenuity, which may at once convince their reason, and gratify their curiosity: *but we preach Christ crucified;* a doctrine so far from suiting the inclinations of either, that *to the Jews* it is *a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* Both agree to reprobate this doctrine, but differently according to their different tempers. To the Hebrew, it is an object of abhorrence; to the Grecian, of contempt. He adds, *but to them who are called*, those who are divinely instructed, *both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God* †.

Nor can we justly wonder that so strange a doctrine as this of the cross, so repugnant to flesh and blood, should, upon the trial, prove so unwelcome to carnal men. If we inquire but ever so little into the circumstances of the case, we shall find, that its reception could not have been any other than it was. The Jewish nation was at that time split into sects, which in many things entertained opinions opposite to one another. Nevertheless, all who expected the Messiah, of whatever sect, concurred in the belief that he would be, what the world calls, an illustrious prince, a mighty conqueror, who would subdue kingdoms, and establish for himself a new universal monarchy, or secular

* 1 Cor. i. 18. † 1 Cor. i. 22—24.

empire, (for of a spiritual kingdom they had no idea) wherein his own nation would be exalted above all the nations of the earth. From these sentiments the Samaritans (however much they differed from the Jews in other respects) seem not to have dissented; in these sentiments all our Lord's disciples had been brought up; and to these sentiments, in spite of the manifest tendency of his instructions and example, they, by their own account, firmly adhered during his life, and even for some time after his resurrection. Nor do they seem ever to have relinquished these sentiments, till the descent of the Holy Ghost, after the ascension, on that memorable day of Pentecost, on which the promulgation of the evangelical economy may properly be said to have commenced.

But it is not enough to say that the Messiah held forth to this people in the gospel, and that which the glosses and traditions of the Rabbies had taught them to expect, were personages widely different. They were, in most respects, the reverse of one another. The people had not yet learnt, that God, though not in the tempest, the earthquake, nor the thunder, may yet be found in the small and feeble voice. Their heads were occupied with ideas of grandeur and majesty merely human. When they were thinking of the royal palace, their attention was called to the shop of the artificer. *Is not this the carpenter* *?* say they, with a mixture of astonishment and contempt. Instead of riches and splendour, behold poverty and humility: For a potentate and warrior they had only a peaceful citizen. In lieu of one whose undertakings were, in the sight of all mankind, to be crowned with glory and success, they were presented with a man incessantly hunted by misfortune from his cradle to his grave; whose friends were few, and enemies innumerable; one who in their eyes had nothing desirable, or, to adopt the expression of the prophet, had *no form nor comeliness* †; one who accordingly, from his first appearance in public, was by all the men of power and influence hated, derided, defamed, persecuted, dishonoured, and at last cruelly murdered. But the stone which the builders rejected soon became the head of the corner.

* Mark vi. 3. † Isa. liii. 2.

Prosperity and adversity have in all ages, and in all nations, had some influence on the judgments of men, in regard to divine favour and aversion; but on no nation had these external things a greater influence than on the Jewish; and under no dispensation or form of religion, true or false, more glaringly, than under the Mosaic. There was something in that institution, it must be acknowledged, which naturally led the attention to these outward distinctions between man and man. The promises and threatenings of the law, interpreted according to the letter, are of things merely temporal. That under these are couched the eternal things of the gospel, is not to be denied; things which were also typified by the established ceremonies and carnal ordinances. But it must be observed, that the literal is the most obvious sense; the spiritual was perceived by those only whose faith or spiritual discernment put them in a capacity of seeing through the veil of symbolical language and ritual observances. For it ever did, and ever will hold, that *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him* *. But in regard to the generality of the people, (I may almost say the whole, the exceptions are so few,) that outward happiness or misery were the standard by which they determined whether a person were the object of the love or of the hatred of Heaven, is a fact that might be evinced, if necessary, from numberless passages both of the Old Testament and of the New. And if this holds in regard to what may be called the general tenor of a man's life, it holds more especially of his death. To be adjudged to the death of a malefactor by the supreme tribunal of the chosen people, they considered as an infallible mark of reprobation. How much more, when the very sort of death, suspension upon a tree, had a special malediction pronounced on it, which, as an indelible stigma, had been engrossed in the body of their law? *He that is hanged is accursed of God* †. The Jews, accordingly, to this day, distinguish our Saviour by the name of THE HANGED MAN, as the most disgraceful they can employ. We cannot then wonder, that to those whose minds were blinded through sensual affection and obdurate prejudices, and in respect of whom, to adopt the apostle's similitude ‡, the veil which covered the face of Moses, too splendid for their weak organs,

* Psal. xxv. 14. † Deut. xxi. 23. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 14.

remained unremoved, (we cannot, I say, wonder, that to them) the Messiah's cross should prove a stumbling-block. It in reality did so. The undoubted fact confirms the reasoning. And the reasoning is, from their avowed principles, so unquestionable, as to be equivalent to the clearest testimony of the fact.

Nor were the prepossessions of Pagans less impregnable, though built on different grounds. Of all nations the Jewish was the most contemned and hated by both Greeks and Romans. That their contempt and hatred were unreasonable, I readily allow. But it is only with the fact I am here concerned, and that is incontrovertible. It were easy, however, to account for it from several peculiarities in the Jewish constitution, which made them be reckoned by others superstitious, unsociable, intolerant, self-opinioned, and untractable. Their refusal of all intercommunity with those of other nations in matters of religion, a thing unexampled amongst idolaters, their distinction of meats into clean and unclean, and their laws in regard to ablutions, which very much interrupted even their civil intercourse with Gentiles, conspired in alienating the minds of strangers. Though not deficient in courage and natural sagacity, their being but little acquainted with the arts of war and government, made them appear inconsiderable in the eyes of the Romans; their ignorance of philosophy and the fine arts rendered them despicable to the Grecians. It would not have been easy to make the people of either nation expect great benefits of any kind from a Jew. But to talk to them of such a one as their Messiah or Saviour, that is, as the terms were explained by the preachers, the purchaser of the remission of sins, of divine favour, of eternal life and happiness, nay, as the person constituted by the Deity judge of all the earth, could, to men so ill affected to that people, hardly appear otherwise than as absolutely ridiculous. How much then was the ridicule enhanced, when they were further informed, that this Messiah, this man of circumcision, of the race of Jacob, had, like a common felon, and in company with common felons, suffered under a Roman procurator the infamous death of crucifixion?

It is not easy for us, at this distance, to enter perfectly into the sentiments and feelings of men, whose manners, opinions,

education, and customs, were so totally different from ours. It is more difficult on this subject, on which our minds have been so long pre-occupied, than on any other. The death of Christ, whom we venerate as our sovereign, our high priest, and teacher in divine things, has, to us Christians, ennobled the cross, the instrument of an event of such ineffable moment to the human race. We can no longer behold it with the same eyes. It is for this reason, that, in Christian countries, the use of it in punishing is universally abolished. We are inclined to consider it as too honourable a destiny, for any after Jesus Christ, of the posterity of Adam, to undergo. But in order to judge of the appearance and effect of a new doctrine, published in a remote period, we must, as much as possible, enter into the opinions and prepossessions that prevailed at the time. Considered in this view, it is but just to observe, that crucifixion was then, in the Roman empire, incomparably more disgraceful than any kind of death known in these days in any part of Christendom. No citizen of Rome, how atrocious soever were his guilt, how mean soever were his station, though the lowest mechanic, or the poorest peasant, could be subjected to it. If a man was not a slave, as well as a criminal, it was not in the power of any magistrate to dishonour him so far as to consign him to so ignominious a punishment. And though the privilege of Romans did not extend to every free subject of the empire; so far did the Roman sentiments prevail in regard to this mode of punishing, that it was held universally as in the last degree opprobrious. Conceive then the emotions which would naturally arise in the minds of such people, when a man (a miserable culprit in their account) who had been compelled publicly to submit to so vile an execution, so degrading, so shocking to humanity, was represented to them as the Son of the Most High God, and the Redeemer of the world. If to men so prepossessed as were the Jews, this doctrine could not fail to appear impious and execrable, (and for a time it did so even to the apostles) to men so prepossessed as were the Gentiles it could not fail to appear nonsensical and absurd.

Nay, it is manifest from the writings of the early apologists for Christianity, in the second and third centuries, that this doctrine continued long to be a principal matter of offence to

the enemies of our religion, and was regarded by such as an insurmountable objection. They treated it as no better than madness, to place confidence in a man whom God had abandoned to the scourge of the executioner, and the indelible reproach of the cross. Yet this doctrine was, from the beginning, so far from being taught covertly by the apostles, as one would have thought that a small share of political wisdom would have suggested; it was so far from being dissembled, and palliated, that it appeared to be that particular of their religion, of which, in spite of the utter abomination it raised in others, in spite of all the obloquy it brought upon themselves, they were chiefly ostentatious. With our apostle *the cross of Christ* is a phrase in familiar use for denoting the whole of this new economy. The foes of the gospel he calls *enemies of the cross of Christ* *. To the Corinthians, he says, he determined to know nothing among them, save *Jesus Christ, and him crucified* †. The offence taken against Christianity he styles, *the offence of the cross* ‡. And the grand object of his glorying was what to others appeared the greatest scandal, *the cross of Christ.* So much in general (for your time does not admit my entering into particulars) of the foolishness of the doctrine.

Let us next consider the weakness of the instruments, the first missionaries of this new religion. What were they? We should certainly think, that a trust of this kind, requiring the most consummate skill and address to manage properly, could not, with the smallest hope of success, be committed to any, but men, who to great natural shrewdness, and acquired knowledge, had all the advantages that result from being acquainted with the world, and conversant in public life. If to these, wealth, nobility, and authority, were added, so much the better. But were the first publishers of the gospel men of this sort? Nothing can be conceived more opposite. A few fishermen of Galilee, and some others of the lowest class of the people, poor, ignorant, totally unacquainted with the world: without any visible advantages natural or acquired; men who, before they received this extraordinary mission, had been obliged to drudge for bread within the narrow limits of a toilsome occupation, and

* Philip. iii. 18. † 1 Cor. ii. 2. ‡ Gal. v. 11.

had probably never dared to open their mouth in places where men of condition (their betters, as we familiarly express it) were present. Such were the agents employed in effecting the greatest revolution ever produced upon the earth. Was it in a rude and unlettered age that this religion was first broached? or was it only to the illiterate that its promulgators were charged to communicate it? It was at the time when Rome was in the zenith of her power; it was at the time when all the Grecian arts and sciences shone forth in their meridian glory. It was then that these plain, unexperienced men were commissioned, not cautiously to impart this doctrine in a whisper, to persons of a particular stamp, but to proclaim it to all indiscriminately, as from the house-tops, to *preach the gospel to every creature* *. These lowly ministers of Jesus did accordingly publish it to the Jews in the temple and in the synagogues, and to the Gentiles in the forums of their cities, and in other places of public resort. Their undaunted spirit and freedom, considering what they were, did indeed amaze their superiors, and all who heard them. When the High Priest, and other members of the Sanhedrim, *saw the boldness of Peter and John*, in the spirited and pertinent reply they made, and perceived *that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled* †.

How different is the policy of Heaven, pardon the expression, from that of earth! How truly is the matter represented in my context! *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence* ‡. The apostles were very sensible of their defects, in respect of natural talents, rank, and education; they knew well, that by men of fashion, men of the world, they were counted *as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things* §. But as their zeal was kindled solely in behalf of the cause of their master, they never affected to conceal or extenuate these defects. They neither disdainfully undervalued those acquired advantages

* Mark xvi. 15.
† Acts iv. 13.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29.
§ 1 Cor. iv. 13.

which they had not, but which were possessed by many of their antagonists, nor vainly arrogated to themselves any merit from the success that attended their preaching. Their humble language was, *We have this treasure*, the doctrine of the gospel, the inestimable riches of Christ, *in earthen vessels*; not vessels of gold or silver, as men of eminence among the great and learned might be called, but vessels of the very coarsest materials, those denominated the dregs of the people, *that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us* *.

We are apt to attend but carelessly to the report of facts to which our ears have been long familiarized. Such is that of the low condition of those who were the first heralds of the gospel of peace. Besides, to us the very title APOSTLES conveys certain ideas of respect and dignity, which, as it were, hide from us the meanness and obscurity of their outward state. In order, therefore, to rouse our attention to this circumstance, of the utmost importance to the right understanding of my argument, let us consider what would be, I say not probably, but certainly, the effect of such an attempt in our own age and nation, made by such ill-provided, and, as we should say, despicable instruments, unaided from above, in opposition to all the established powers, religion, laws, and learning of the country. Yet we have no reason to believe that our fishermen are, in any respect, inferior to the fishers of those days on the lake of Gennesaret. It would not perhaps be difficult to prove, that in point of education, in this part of the island at least, they are even superior. But to render the parallel complete, and to make it tally perfectly with the infidel hypothesis about the promulgation of the gospel, we must conceive something still more marvellous; namely, that a few such men in this country, so wretchedly accoutred, so unfurnished with human means, friendless and pennyless, unacquainted with every language but their mother-tongue, of which they can speak only a provincial and barbarous dialect, form the vast project of traversing Holland, France, Germany, and the other countries on the continent, in order to make converts abroad, to impose on all mankind, and to publish throughout the world a scheme of doctrine they had

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

previously concerted among themselves. With the least reflection we see the absolute impracticability of such a plan, when brought home to ourselves. Indeed it is so glaringly impracticable, that it is not easy for us to conceive that such an extravagance could ever enter into the heads of men in their senses. Yet not one jot better equipped were the apostles, if we abstract from supernatural aid, than such projectors as I have now supposed. In point of language, a most essential circumstance, they could be no way superior *.

Now the nature of things, my brethren, was the same then that it is at present, and means which we perceive now to be perfectly inadequate, must have been always so. I do not talk of the improbability that such sort of men should, at the risk of peace, liberty, life, and every thing valuable, and without any imaginable motive, have conceived a project so fantastic, because so totally beyond their sphere, as that of subverting all the religious establishments on the face of the earth, of extirpating at once opinions, ceremonies, laws, which had subsisted for many centuries, and even whole orders in society, by substituting, in lieu of all these, a new theory of theirs, founded in a false story of their own devising. Nor do I talk of the absurdity of imagining, as some have done, that men who were neither fools nor mad (and if they had been either, their success would not have been less unaccountable) should, in a matter entirely subjected to the testimony of their senses, have imposed upon themselves, and thought they were promoting truth, if it was not so. But I talk at present of the impossibility of such agents succeeding by natural means, in such a design, however formed. To account for the success, therefore, we must necessarily admit the divine original of the whole, and have recourse to the concurrence of him who *calleth the things that are not as though they were* †, and who alone can *destroy*

* The speech of the common people has always most of the peculiarities of the province. We have no reason to think that the dialect of any of the twelve was preferable to that of Peter. Yet he was detected at Jerusalem by a servant maid, from his uncouth idiom and accent, to be a Galilean; at a time when, we may believe, he would gladly have concealed his country, by disguising his tongue, if it had been in his power. Matth. xxvi. 73.

† Rom. iv. 17.

the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. With such an almighty assistant, and nothing less will account for it, they might well be superior to fear and apprehension, and might boldly challenge all human opposition, and say, *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world* *.

But it will perhaps be urged, that the apostle Paul ought to be considered as an exception from the general remark I have been explaining. Was not he a man of letters, bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, a famous Jewish doctor, and instructed in all the scriptural and traditionary learning of the Jews? Nay, does it not appear, that he was not altogether unacquainted with the writings of the Grecian poets? It is indeed true; and as we judge of every thing by comparison, so when he is compared with his brethren in the apostolate, he may be denominated *learned.* But it ought to be observed, that as his learning consisted chiefly, I might almost say solely, in the Scriptures, and the rabbinical doctrine of the Pharisees, it is notorious in how little esteem that kind of erudition was among the Gentiles, of whom he was eminently the apostle. Of whatever account, therefore, this knowledge might have been, had his mission been only or chiefly to the Jews; I must think, it was of very little, if any at all, to the Greeks and Romans. To them all Jewish literature appeared no better than unintelligible, and therefore insignificant, jargon; or, as Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, contemptuously styled it, *questions of words and names, and of their law* †. Whatever use Paul might have made of his learning, in disputing with the Jewish doctors, it could be of no service in his disputes with the philosophers of Greece, and the *literati* of Rome. It is remarkable, therefore, that the only man among the first preachers of the gospel, who was in any degree qualified to cope with the learned men of Judea, was not sent to them, but to nations amongst whom his Hebraistic knowledge could give him no advantage. Whereas Peter, who is by way of eminence styled the apostle of the Circumcision, as the other is of the Gentiles ‡; (Peter, I say), though of their own country, was but one of the untaught rabble,

* 1 Cor. i. 19, 20. † Acts xviii. 15. ‡ Gal. ii. 7, 8.

who, on account of the meanness of their birth and station, as well as their ignorance, were by the haughty scribes and rulers accounted the refuse of the earth. *This people*, say they, *who know not the law, are cursed* *. Nor could Paul, in respect of rank, claim great superiority over the rest. He was only a handicraftsman, having been bred a tent-maker; a business which he occasionally exercised, for the support of himself and his attendants, during his apostleship.

Ay but had not this man all the advantage resulting from the Grecian arts of logic and rhetoric? Did he not speak their language with elegance and purity? I know the apostle has had some strenuous and well-meaning advocates, especially among the moderns, not infidels, but Christians, who, with more zeal than judgment, have maintained the affirmative. I am far from denying, that this eminent servant of our Lord possessed considerable talents, in respect of natural eloquence, depth of thought, strength of reasoning, and nervousness of expression. But that his Greek diction was pure and classical, or that in composing he followed the rules laid down by rhetoricians, we have the greatest reason to deny. His works that are extant, do, to every able and candid judge of these matters, show the contrary. The contrary was admitted by the best critics and orators among the Greek fathers, who must be allowed more capable of judging of propriety, fluency, and harmony, in their native tongue, than any modern can be in a dead and foreign language †. Further, the contrary is frankly owned by the apostle himself. Nay, he insists, that according to the divine counsel it must be so, this being of a piece with all the other natural means God had employed in the work. Thus he was *sent to preach the gospel*, as he tells us in the context, *not with wisdom of words*, Why? *Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect* ‡. Shall we then maintain his oratorical talents in spite of himself, and in spite of the irrefragable reason he adduces from the analogy of the divine procedure, in this whole dispensation? It would be paying him but a bad compliment, to extol his elocution at the expence of his veracity; for we are under a necessity of denying one or other. It appears, that his enemies made a handle of the rudeness and inelegance of his

* John vii. 49. † Such were Origin and Chrysostom. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 17.

style, to injure his reputation, especially at Corinth, where oratory was much in vogue. But though he vindicates himself from their other censures, he invariably admits the truth of this. *Though rude in speech*, says he, *yet not in knowledge* *. And, *I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom* †. And, *the things of God we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth* ‡. Again, *My speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom.* He assigns the reason, the same in import with that given formerly, *that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God* §. Speaking of their sentiments concerning him, *His letters say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible* ‖. The power ascribed to his letters undoubtedly refers to the sense conveyed in them, and the ardour of spirit by which they are animated. That they did not conceive any part of their merit to the purity or harmony of the style, is manifest from the latter part of the character, especially when compared with what is repeatedly acknowledged in other places. Paul therefore had neither the graces of person, nor the ornaments of elocution, to recommend or enforce his doctrine. His language to Greek ears must have appeared idiomatical, not to say barbarous. And as his sort of learning was but ill adapted to the people of Greece, Italy, or Asia Minor, amongst whom his mission chiefly lay, he did not possess that superiority over the other apostles which is commonly imagined. Justly therefore might we apply to a Christian who should zealously assert the classic purity of our apostle's style, the rebuke which our Lord once gave to Peter, on an occasion not unsimilar: *Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men* ¶. The weakness, the infirmity, or, if you will, the insufficiency of these messengers of the new covenant, was their glory, and their boast. Their motive was, *that the power of Christ might rest upon* them **, and be manifested by them. To men of the world, indeed, the doctrine appeared not more foolish, than the ministry was weak.

* 2 Cor. xi. 6. † 1 Cor. ii. 1. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 13.
§ 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. ‖ 2 Cor. x. 10. ¶ Matth. xvi. 23.
** 2 Cor. xii. 9.

I have now, as I proposed in the first place, shown the inability of the natural means employed in promulgating the gospel, to effect the end.

I proceed to consider, secondly, the rapid and unexampled success of the means that were employed. As to the rapidity of the success, need I use many words to evince a point so evident, and so universally acknowledged? The canon of Scripture was not finished, that generation had not passed, when Jesus Christ had disciples and churches in Judea, Samaria, Syria, Phenicia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, the countries of Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Egypt, and as far as Ethiopia. This we learn, partly from the books of the New Testament, partly from the authentic remains of the apostolic fathers. Whilst the faith of the gospel was deeply rooted in all those who professed it; whilst nothing but faith could induce any one to make the profession; whilst the professors themselves were harrassed on every side with the most violent persecutions,—the church of Christ, in spite of all opposition, and every species of discouragement, increased daily. In less than three centuries, for I reckon not from the birth of Christ, but as in a computation of this kind we ought to reckon, from the first publication of the gospel at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, (in less than three centuries) Christianity having pierced into Gaul, Spain, Britain, and the African countries lying on the Mediterranean, became the predominant religion of the Roman Empire, which comprehended the greater and better part of the then known world. Nor was its extent limited by the empire. It did indeed, with wonderful celerity, overspread the most populous countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Since its establishment by human laws, it has been put on so different a footing, and the methods taken for propagating it, have been, on some occasions at least, so completely altered, and so little warranted by the spirit and precepts of that religion, that the success or want of success of these methods can hardly affect our present argument.

Now, as it is admitted on all hands, that the success of the first preachers of the gospel was great and rapid, I maintain that it still remains unexampled. I do not mean to state a

comparison between conversion and conquest; between subduing the mind by persuasion, by what our apostle emphatically calls *the foolishness of preaching* *, and conquering the body by the sword. In the one, both the reason and the will are gained by teaching; in the other, a feigned assent is sometimes extorted by violence, and maintained by terror. It does not therefore in the least concern my argument, what the success was of the Mahometan, I say not doctrine, but arms. Their engine was war, not preaching. The weapons of their warfare were carnal, those of the gospel spiritual. Their aim was submission, not belief; the external profession of the mouth, not the internal conviction of the understanding. When the like methods came to be adopted by Christians, (for too soon, alas! they were adopted, a sure sign that the religion of Jesus was then grossly corrupted and debased) the success is doubtless to be accounted for in the same manner. Every candid person will admit, that the success of Charlemaign over the Saxons, is no more an evidence of divine favour, than that of Mahomet over the Arabs.

But when all attempts of this kind are set aside, one will perhaps be at a loss what to bring into comparison with the first promulgation of the gospel. It is not, however, for want of numerous and repeated trials, even in the way of preaching; but when the effect is inconsiderable, or not correspondent to the expectation raised, the attempt itself comes gradually to be either quite forgotten, or little minded. Crusades, wars, and massacres, have not been the only methods employed by Rome, not over-scrupulous about the means, when the advancement of the hierarchy, that is, the extension of her empire, is the end. She knows how to employ preachers, as well as inquisitors, executioners, and soldiers. Nay, it is no more than doing her justice to acknowledge, that no church whatever, no state, no society, has done half so much in this way as she has done. But with what effect? Has there appeared, in any part of the world, even where her missionaries have been most numerous, any fruits of their missions which bear a resemblance to the fruits so quickly produced every where by the apostles of our Lord? Let the most sanguine votaries of that church, who know any thing of the matter, say so, if they dare.

* 1 Cor. i. 21.

What then is the reason of the difference? Had the latter, the apostles of our Lord, any advantages (observe I speak of human and natural advantages) which the former, the Popish missionaries, had not? Quite the reverse. Every such advantage has been on the side of the missionary, not one on the side of the apostle. They are not ignorant artificers of the lowest class whom Rome engages in such a business. She has too much worldly wisdom (notwithstanding her arrogant and not very consistent pretence to miracles) ever to employ such messengers. Neither do her apostles go without the utmost preparation, that not only a learned education, according to the times, can give them, but such particular instructions, study, and discipline, as will serve best to qualify them to accommodate themselves to those to whom they are sent, to gain upon the people, and to bear with fortitude the difficulties and hardships they may be obliged to encounter. It is plain, therefore, that she puts no confidence in her supernatural powers, and acts precisely as though she were conscious she had none. Indeed, since the establishment at Rome of the congregation *de propaganda fide*, no attention, no pains, no expence, have been spared, that could serve for procuring all necessary information in regard to the languages, arts, manners, and customs, of the different nations and tribes to whom it is judged proper to send preachers; that they may be furnished, as much as possible, with every human and natural assistance for the work in which they are engaged. Yet what has been the success hitherto? If one were to judge by the exaggerated accounts that have sometimes been given by the missionaries themselves, we should think them wonderful indeed. But if we judge by the more impartial representations given by others, or by, what is still a better criterion, the remaining effects of their missions, we must pronounce them inconsiderable. In many places there is not now a vestige of their labours. In other places, the traces that have been left are, I may say, equivocal, as well as few. Father Charlevoix, one of their own people, in his account of the North American savages, observes, that the missions had been very unsuccessful among them; and, what is more surprising, mentions one missionary, who had ingratiated himself so far with one of their tribes, that they would even have chosen him

for their chief, who nevertheless had not been able to persuade one single person among them to embrace Christianity *.

Well, but if the attempts have not proved so successful in the West, what wonders in the way of conversion have not been performed by a Saint Francis Xavier and his associates in the East? Indeed there is no man in these latter ages who has been so much, and I believe so deservedly, celebrated for his labours in this way, as this friar, whom Rome has dignified with the title of *the Apostle of the Indies.* He was certainly a most zealous promoter of a cause which he doubtless believed to be the cause of God. His pious intentions deserve the commendation of those who can pity his errors and absurdities. Regard to the voice of conscience, even though a misinformed conscience, is still respectable. But is it not well known, that this famous missionary was not only a man of learning, the best that was then to be had, but, along with his companions, acted under the auspices of the viceroy of Goa, the metropolis of the Portuguese settlements in India? and where, for the greater security of the faith, they soon thought proper to establish the inquisition. Is it not evident, that in most places where the missionaries exercised their function, they were under the protection of the victorious fleets and armies of the king of Portugal? And even where these had not reached, the terror of their name had reached, and was of no little service to these itinerant teachers. How unlike the case of the poor fishermen of Galilee! Miracles indeed, stupendous miracles, were pretended to by them, and those of their party. For we have only the representations of one side. It is surprising they were so often at a loss for one miraculous power, the gift of tongues, so common in the primitive church, which would have been of greater service to them than all the rest together. This however they laudably supplied the best way they could, by the use of interpreters, as well as by study and application.

An eminent French preacher of the last century has affirmed, in a panegyrical sermon on this apostle of the Pope, that he spread the light of the gospel through more than three thousand leagues of country, and subjected no less than fifty-two kingdoms to Jesus Christ. These are big words; But where,

* Letter xxxi.

I pray, is that country? and where are those kingdoms? This is rather too violent an hyperbole, even for an orator. The conquests made by the Portuguese arms, in like manner as those made since by other European powers, Protestant as well as Popish, are not surely to be called kingdoms converted by preaching the gospel. Yet, abstracting from these settlements, or, if ye will, usurpations, it would be difficult to point out so much as one of those fifty-two kingdoms subdued to Christ. Of the same kind is that other assertion in the same discourse, that Xavier has more than repaired in the East all the hurt done to Rome by Luther, and Calvin, and the other reformers (heresiarchs, as he terms them) in the West. Can there be a clearer demonstration of the little regard that is due to the word of a panegyrist and partyman? At this day, even in the East, those reformers have more disciples than Rome has. But, alas? it is not by what the apostle calls *the foolishness of preaching* that disciples have been gained there to either side. The greater part have been transplanted from Europe, or are the descendants of those who were first transplanted thither. The rest are the effects more of conquest than of conversion.

But what shall be said of the wonderful success of Xavier in the islands of Japan? It was indeed as signal as it has proved transitory. Nothing could be more promising than the appearances were for some time. But there was a latent seed of corruption in the doctrine which those missionaries unknowingly misnamed the gospel, that, springing up, produced a plentiful crop of its ordinary fruits, pride, ambition, violence, and faction. These provoked a persecution, which quickly terminated in the total extinction of that infant church. Francis Solier, a Jesuit, who writes the ecclesiastic history of Japan, expresses his astonishment, that God should have permitted the blood of so many martyrs to be shed, without serving (as in the first ages of Christianity) as a fruitful seed for producing new Christians. But this can be no matter of wonder to the intelligent believer. The truth is, the cause was not more different at that time, (though under the same name) from what it had been, than were the usual methods by which it was propagated. 'The Christianity of the sixteenth century,' says a late writer, 'had no right to hope for the same favour and protec-

'tion from God, as the Christianity of the three first centuries. 'The latter was a benign, gentle, and patient religion, which 'recommended to subjects submission to their sovereign, and 'did not endeavour to raise itself to the throne by rebellion. 'But the Christianity preached to the infidels of the sixteenth 'century was far different. It was a bloody, murderous reli- 'gion, that had been inured to slaughter for five or six hundred 'years. It had contracted a very long habit of maintaining and 'aggrandizing itself by putting to the sword all that resisted it. 'Fires, executions, the dreadful tribunal of the inquisition, cru- 'sades, bulls exciting subjects to rebellion, seditious preachers, 'conspiracies, assassinations of princes, were the ordinary me- 'thods employed against those who refused submission to its 'orders *.' The ingenuous confession of a Spaniard, more honest, it would appear, than wise, may be pleaded in justification of the sanguinary precautions taking by the Emperor of Japan. Being asked by the king of Tossa, one of the Japanese isles, and probably one of the fifty-two kingdoms mentioned by Bourdaloue, How the king of Spain got possession of so great an extent of country in both hemispheres? he answered frankly, That he used to send friars to preach the gospel to foreign nations; and that, after having converted a considerable number of Heathens, he sent his forces, who joining with the new converts, conquered the country. The Christians in that island (such Christians as they were) paid dear for this indiscreet confession. Poor then, if we may judge by the present effects, has been the success of their missions among barbarians. Have they succeeded better in civilized nations? Their missions in China, it is true, have subsisted for centuries. But will the candid and judicious, even of that communion, say, that the consequences have been proportioned to what might have been expected from the assiduity, labour, and expence bestowed on them? Most Roman Catholics themselves consider the greater part of the Chinese proselytes, as more than half Pagans still. What will Protestants then reckon them?

I know not any thing done by Romanists in modern times, that appears more favourable, than what has been effected by some Jesuits in the inland parts of South America, in the

* General Dictionary, Article *Japan*, Note E.

country called *Paraguay*. But of this, I am afraid, we have not as yet sufficient knowledge to enable us to form a judgment that can be depended on. Some things, however, will deserve our notice, that we may be satisfied that there is no similarity in this case to the primitive publication of the gospel. In the first place, those Jesuits are to be considered more as the founders of a polity than as the publishers of a religion. Religion indeed makes an essential part of their establishment; still it is but a part. Nothing could be more opposite to the conduct of the apostles, whose sole object was to preach the doctrine and law of Christ, and, without interfering in the least with the rights of civil governors, to bring men every where to the obedience of the faith. I observe, secondly, that instead of those poor, illiterate, and obscure men, who first promulged to the world the everlasting gospel of the Son of God, we have here some select members of an opulent, learned, and political society, who were careful to be previously instructed in the language, manners, and religious observances of the people whom they were to teach; men who had most attentively studied the policy of the ancient South American states, particularly of the Incas of Peru, and the arts they had successfully employed in subduing the ferocity of their neighbours. I observe, thirdly, that it was more by insinuation, and indirectly, than by open and professed teaching, that the knowledge of Christianity was introduced by them. Their direct and only object long appeared to be to teach those savages agriculture, the most necessary manufactures, the art of building, and the other arts most conducive to civilization; and when in this way they had sufficiently recommended themselves to their confidence, to take occasion of inculcating, especially on the children intrusted to their care, their religious principles. The method of the apostles was much shorter; they did not find the least necessity for such artificial management.

Nor was it only in South America that the Popish missionaries found it convenient to recur to these arts. Of how much consequence it has been for promoting the success of the Chinese mission, that those charged with it were able mathematicians, astronomers, geographers, physicians, and natural philosophers; and how much their knowledge in the sciences con-

duced to procure them the attention and respect of the natives, all the world knows. Where was the man of these modern apostles, who could say, as the apostle Paul, the poor Hebrew artisan, did to the Corinthians, *determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified?* Short, we may believe, would have been their abode in China, and in other places too, had they proceeded on this plan. But Paul needed not to depend on any human supplements or assistances whatever. Nothing indeed could be more unlike, or rather greater contrasts, in all respects, than the first ambassadors and the last, those of Jesus Christ and those of the Roman Pontiff. The last were possessed of those accomplishments which preserved them from appearing despicable to any; the manifest superiority of their knowledge in the elegant, as well as in many of the useful arts, made them be respected as almost a superior order of beings, even by those whom they could not persuade to turn Christian. The first, on the contrary, on account of their low rank, and ignorance of the arts of civilized life, were acknowledged to be, in many respects, but weak and contemptible instruments, even by those who were converted by their ministry. This was evidently the case of him who of them all had the best pretensions to knowledge and education. Not to mention the pageantry, even the rich sacerdotal vestments used by the Romish clergy in their worship are naturally fitted to make an impression on the senses, not only of barbarians, but of the weak and superstitious even of polished nations. How different must the ordinary and homely garments of the primitive preachers have appeared, worn constantly in their peregrinations! for they were not permitted to carry with them so much as a change of raiment *. Nor is this so trivial a circumstance as to some perhaps, on a superficial view, it will appear. Yet after all, with every human and natural advantage, what have been the fruits of the last labours compared with those of the first? Have we not gotten ample reason, in this view also, to adopt the apostle's words, and, on contrasting Christ's humble delegates to the accomplished ambassadors of Rome, to say, *Where*, now, *is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made fool-*

* Matth. x. 10.—Luke ix. 3.

ish the wisdom of this world? For God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, the weak to confound the mighty, the base and the despised, yea and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. If riches and learning, and the most refined policy, with the countenance and support of the secular powers, cannot, though combined, accomplish what, in opposition to all these, is effected with ease by poverty and illiterate simplicity, can we hesitate a moment in pronouncing, *This is the finger of God?*

I proceed, in the *last* place, to the improvement we ought to make of the doctrine now explained.

The *first* use it points to, is to strengthen our faith in the divine original of the holy religion we profess. This is the immediate conclusion of the premises I have been illustrating and supporting. For if there was an utter inability in the natural means employed in propagating the gospel, without divine interposition, to effectuate the end; if the end nevertheless has by these means been effectuated in a way which no human and natural advantages whatever could emulate, it must have been accompanied by divine interposition. Our religion is therefore of God, and not of man.

If we do not enjoy the advantages of being eye-witnesses of present miracles, we have sufficient evidence of those performed in ancient times. We have not only the amplest and most unexceptionable testimony that they were performed, but we have so many and so remarkable consequences of the performance, as it is utterly impossible for us otherwise to account for. Nor is this a modern view of the matter, arising, as might be supposed, from our ignorance, and the distance of that period. It is, on the contrary, a very ancient and striking argument; and seems, from the first ceasing of miraculous powers, to have affected every judicious and reflecting Christian. Observe how Augustine, who lived about fourteen hundred years earlier than we, and who had good occasion to know what the effects of the apostolic labours had been, argues with the infidels of his day from the same topic. 'If,' says he, 'ye will

'not believe the miracles of the apostles, ye must at least be-'lieve this miracle, that the world was, by such instruments, 'without miracles, converted.' This was, in his judgment, as it is, for the reasons I have assigned, also, in mine, more incredible, or, if ye will, more miraculous, than all the miracles which the gospel requires us to believe. I repeat it, the reality of the supernatural facts recorded in holy writ, is the only plausible, the only rational account that can be given of the effects produced, both on the first propagators of the faith themselves, and on their hearers, Jews and Gentiles of all denominations. On every other hypothesis, at every step I advance, I meet with difficulties insurmountable. To say, that these poor, simple, unbred, ignorant, timid men, purposely devised so unfeasible an imposture, and, wretchedly ill-provided as they were for so desperate an enterprise, attempted at all risks to persuade the world, on their word, to receive it, is to me an absurdity equal to any that can be found in the most legendary performance. I do not find it one jot more admissible, to affirm, that they had previously imposed upon themselves, and believed the falsehoods they advanced. No enthusiasm, no fanaticism, nothing less than insanity, will account for such delusion, in a matter, not of opinion or speculation, but (as it was to them) of sense, of sight, and feeling. And if to all their other disadvantages, they were really insane, or frantic, their success will, if possible, be still more wonderful. Such is the misfortune of the infidel solutions of this matter, that if you attempt to lighten any part of their scheme of those weights that oppress it, you are sure to lay a heavier load on some other part. And indeed, without the addition of madness or idiocy, the success of such men in such an undertaking, supposing no interposal of Heaven, requires a greater share of credulity to admit, than will be found requisite in a reasonable Christian.

God has not, in respect of revealed, any more than in respect of natural religion, left himself without a witness. Sufficient evidence has been and will be always given. But different sorts of evidence suit the different stages of the church. Visible miracles were proper, they were even necessary, to attest a revelation pretending to be from God; an event really miraculous, but needing attestation, because not sensibly so to

those who did not receive it immediately from Heaven. The fruits produced by the miracles then wrought, and which, on every other supposition but the truth of the miracles, are totally inexplicable: and the fulfilment of prophecies then given, which we may call intelligible, if not palpable, miracles, are the evidences that suit more the maturity of the church. The intrinsic evidence arising from the nature and genius of the dispensation itself, belongs alike to every period. Things are better balanced than we imagine. In the third and fourth centuries they had a nearer, and therefore doubtless a distincter view of the amazing success which had attended the first preaching of the gospel, notwithstanding all the disadvantages the preachers laboured under. But then they could not know so well from experience as we of latter ages may, that it is not in the power of all human talents, natural and acquired, though combined together, to produce a parallel to that success.

Let us not therefore fancy ourselves excused in our unbelief, or disobedience, because we have not precisely that sort of evidence which others had. If we resist sufficient evidence, we are equally culpable with those who were regardless of all the proofs, those demonstrations of the Spirit and of power, that were given by our Lord and his apostles. If we do not enjoy the advantages of those of that age, we do not labour under their disadvantages, which are more considerable than we perhaps are aware of. Such are the inveterate prejudices which their education had infused, in direct opposition to the doctrine, and the contempt, nay even the ridicule, which the paltry appearance (as in the language of the world we should term it) of those heavenly ambassadors, could not fail to create. These things tend more to preclude attention and inquiry than men are apt to think. It is with the understanding, the eye of the mind, as with the bodily eyes. However good they are, and however strong the light may be, they will never perceive that from which they are always turned.

I OBSERVE, *secondly*, That from any thing hitherto advanced, we cannot justly infer the inutility of human learning in the cause of religion. It was for a special reason, and in singular circumstances, that God was pleased to reject the use of it in

the first promulgation of the gospel. When this new dispensation was ushered into the world, that its origin might be nowise equivocal, the aid of power, riches, learning, and oratory, which have great influence on the minds of men, was absolutely rejected; the very reverse were chosen in the instruments God saw meet to employ, weakness, poverty, ignorance of the world, and of the arts and sciences; that no considerate person might be at a loss to what to ascribe the effects produced; that the excellency of the power, to the conviction of every impartial spectator, might be of God, and not of man. There was a time, and a time of great danger too, it was in the reign of Jehoshaphat, when God by his prophet commanded his people not to be dismayed, or even to fight for the common safety; telling them, that the battle was God's; that they needed only to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with them *. In like manner, when God delivered Israel from the Midianites, by the hand of Gideon, of an army of thirty-two thousand he permitted only three hundred to go to battle, and with so small a force totally routed an innumerable host of aliens †. But neither of these cases was according to the usual procedure of Providence. On all ordinary occasions, it was the express command of Heaven, to all that were capable, to fight for their brethren, their sons, and their daughters, their wives, and their houses, remembering the Lord, who is great and terrible, and confiding in him ‡. It is only in extraordinary cases (such as the first promulgation of the gospel) that the ordinary means are dispensed with. These are in part the talents which God requires us to lay out in his service.

There have been some who, without attending to the peculiarity of the case, have rashly concluded from some expressions in the New Testament, that learning of every kind is rather an obstruction than a help in propagating religion. But on this topic they preserve no uniformity in their manner of arguing. Who will deny, that we ought to study the language of a people who speak a different language, before we attempt to instruct them? Yet this branch of learning was as much superseded by the gift of tongues, so common in the apostolic church, as the other branches were by the other supernatural gifts.

* 2 Chron. xx. 14, &c. † Judg. vii. 1, &c. ‡ Neh. iv.

And they were all set aside for the same reason; not a natural unfitness, but, on the contrary, a natural *fitness*, for attracting respect, and producing persuasion; since, in consequence of this fitness, the effect might erroneously be ascribed to them; and the miraculous interposition of Heaven, to which alone it ought to be attributed, might be excluded or overlooked. In that singular case, the battle was God's peculiarly. The people were to stand still, and see his salvation. Nothing was to be done but by particular direction. Now he chooses to operate by the intervention of natural means, and commands us to quit us like men, assiduously to exert every talent that may with probability be profitably employed in this service. The common reply, though true, is not satisfactory, That human learning has by misapplication been greatly abused in matters of religion; for what talent is there that has not been abused and misapplied? But if, on account of the abuse, we were to renounce the use of a thing in itself good, all means whatever ought to be laid aside. Even preaching, than which nothing has been more abused, must be given up for ever.

Let it not be imagined, that what was said in regard to the use made of arts and sciences by the Popish missionaries, was with a view to condemn or discredit such expedients. It was only with an intention to show, that there were many causes to which the success of those missionaries, comparatively little, might be attributed, without recurring to miracles; whereas there was nothing that could account for the astonishing success of the apostles, in whom all those advantages were wanting, but miracles alone. It was not to depreciate the wisdom of man, but to show that the foolishness of God is wiser. So far from condemning the Roman Catholics in this, I approve, I applaud their zeal, their solicitude, their perseverance. I only regret, they are so much mistaken in the object; and that it is not for the simple truth as it is in Jesus, that these qualities are exercised. I exceedingly regret, that it has fared with the gospel in their hands, as it did with the Mosaic law in the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees; that the precepts and glosses of men have corrupted and disfigured the word of God; and that the traditions of the Romish, as formerly of the Jewish rabbies, have, in many instances, rendered the divine commandment of

none effect. If our industry were equal to theirs, we might well expect superior success from the superiority of our cause. Let us not hesitate to take example in what is praise-worthy from whom in other respects we disapprove. Our Lord did not scruple to recommend to his disciples, as a lesson of prudence, the provident care even of an unfaithful steward: *For the children of this world*, says he, *are in their generation wiser than the children of light* *. The Romanists claim the high prerogative of working miracles; yet they pursue such politic measures as show that they lay no stress on that privilege. There are, on the other hand enthusiasts, who, though they do not in words arrogate supernatural power, act as if they possessed it, treating with contempt the ordinary and natural means. Both are in extremes. And I shall only say of them, that if the latter speak with more honesty, the former act with more judgment.

Still however we are to be understood with this limitation, that the means employed must never be repugnant to the unalterable rule of truth and right, or to the spirit of that holy religion which we desire to propagate. A good end will never sanctify bad means. Men have too often, in the cause of God, as they pretended, had recourse to deceit and violence. Those unhallowed instruments, so contradictory to the precepts, and so subversive of the spirit of the gospel, they have thought they consecrated, by christening them *pious frauds*, and *wholesome severities*. Let us ever remember, that it is impossible that the God of mercy and truth should accept such detestable offerings: *Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing*, says David. *The Lord will abhor both the bloody and the deceitful man* †.

I OBSERVE, *thirdly*, and I conclude with it, that though in these days no missions can hope for success comparable to that which attended the ministry of the apostles, this consideration ought not to discourage such attempts, or lessen the ardour of Christians for the advancement of the gospel. It was fitting that the ministry of the Son of God, and of his select servants, by whom the foundations of the church were laid, should be

* Luke xvi. 8. † Psal. v. 6.

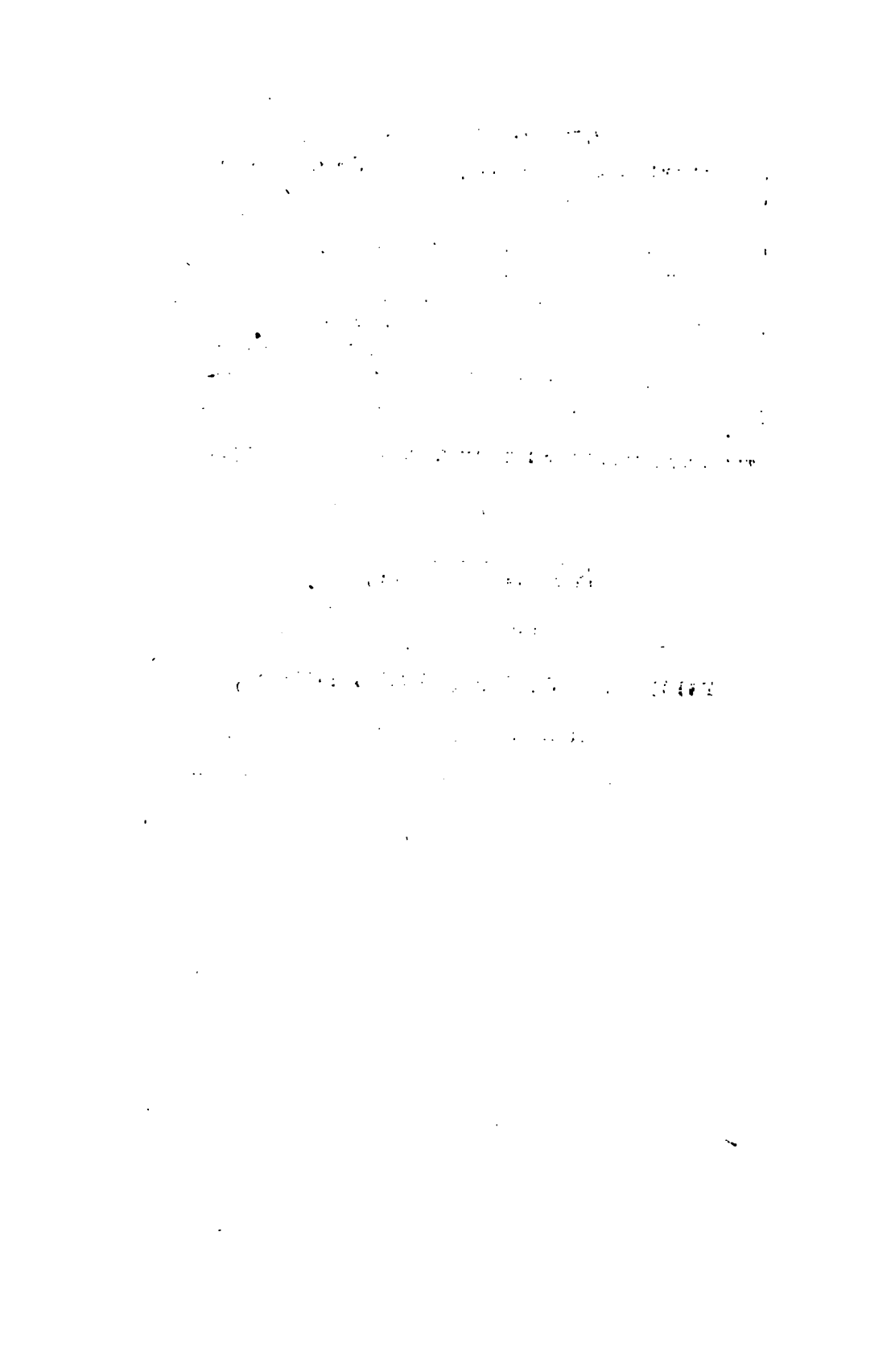
signalized by the most glorious manifestations of divine presence and agency. This was to serve to all future ages as a proof that the commission came from God. But let it not be suspected by any, that God will ever fail to countenance the cause of his Son, the cause of truth and virtue, and to honour those with his approbation who exert themselves to promote it. For one to say, 'Because I cannot do good equal to that which with 'the aid of miracles the first preachers of the gospel did, I will 'do none at all,' would be talking neither like a Christian, nor like a reasonable person. The great and the rich have it in their power to be more extensively useful to their fellow-creatures than the ignoble and the poor: Are the latter therefore exempted from being as useful as they can? God requires of every man according to what he has, and not according to what he has not *. Will it be a good apology for the servant who receives one talent, to say, 'Because I received not, like some 'others, five talents, I thought it unnecessary to employ myself 'in the improvement of so small a stock?' The case of individuals, and that of whole generations, is in this respect similar. To do what we can to diffuse the light of the gospel, and communicate the benefits thereof to others, is what every motive of piety to God and benevolence to men requires of us. And we may say, with the greatest justice, that none deserve better of mankind, than those whose labour and wealth are employed in promoting the interests of their fellow-creatures, the most valuable for time and for eternity. For this reason, the disciples of Jesus will entertain a due veneration for that truly Christian and truly patriotic Society, who have honoured me with their commands to address you on this occasion. Their assiduous attention has long been fixed, and by the blessing of Heaven has not been fixed in vain, on the most sublime and important of all objects, the extension of the kingdom of Messiah, and the salvation of the souls of men. I speak not thus to convince you of the just title they have to your esteem. This is a very small matter to those who seek not the praise of men, but that which comes from God, the omniscient and unerring Judge. But I speak to awaken the same zeal in the breasts of you, my hearers, and to excite every one of this assembly, to co-operate

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

to the utmost of his power, in promoting the same noble ends.

And let us all add fervent prayers to strenuous and virtuous endeavours. *Pray*, said David *, *for the peace of Jerusalem.* Our Jerusalem is the church of Christ, the antitype of that metropolis, the true city of the great King. Of HER we may justly say, *They shall prosper that love* THEE. *Peace be within* THY *walls, and prosperity within* THY *palaces! For* our *brethren and companions sakes* we *will say, Peace be within* THEE. *Because of the house of the Lord our God, we will seek* THY *good.*

* Psal. cxxii. 6.



THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON CIVIL SOCIETY;

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE ASSIZES AT ABERDEEN,

SUNDAY, MAY 23d, 1779.

SERMON III.

PROV. XIV. 34.—*Righteousness exalteth a nation.*

THERE is no subject on which libertines show more inconsistency, than on what regards the advantages derived from religion to civil society. When their design is to vindicate their open contempt of its principles, and violation of its precepts, they fail not to represent it as a burden both intolerable and unnecessary, and which, without yielding any benefit that can be called a compensation for so great a sacrifice, requires a degree of self-denial that nearly approaches to a renunciation of liberty. On the other hand, when they attempt to account for its origin, and the universality of its reception in some form or other throughout the world, they constantly recur to the arts of politicians, who have seen the absolute necessity of this expedient for keeping the people in subjection, and adding authority to their laws. They do not seem to advert, that these pleas are incompatible with each other; and that, in regard at least to the utility of religion, they confessedly oppose the common sense of mankind; since they exhibit the leaders, and lawgivers, in every nation, as concurring, though not by concert, in the conviction, that without the reverence of some power superior to human, man would be ungovernable. Yet the belief of the existence and agency of such a power is, on other occasions, treated with ridicule by those sages, and represented as a principle not only useless, but extremely cumbersome. And if, upon reflection, any of them relax a little on this article, and admit that it may be of use, that the gross of mankind believe the superintendency of a supreme being over the affairs of the world, particularly over the actions of men, they ought doubtless to account those persons bad citizens as well as infidels, who by their practice, conversation, or writings, attempt to undermine such useful principles, and, as far as in them lies, to

loose the bands which, by giving additional strength to social duties, bind men more closely to one another.

Though it were easy to demonstrate, both from the nature of the thing, and from the most authentic history, that religion neither is, nor could have been, (as some have profanely represented it) a state-device for keeping the people in awe; it must be owned, that the necessity thereof for preserving the peace and order, and for promoting the happiness of social life, was very early observed, and has been universally acknowledged. But, as there may be some, who, though they admit the fact in general, may not clearly perceive the connection, and consequently may not be sufficiently fortified against the cavils of infidelity and scepticism, now so common, I purpose at this time to lay before you some of the principal arguments whereby religion is proved to be of the utmost importance to the security and well-being of civil society.

This happy tendency of the religious character to advance national prosperity, is, in my judgment, the sentiment intended to be conveyed by Solomon in my text: *Righteousness exalteth a nation.* For though, by the word *Righteousness*, sometimes no more is meant than the virtue of *justice*, it much oftener in Scripture-language denotes 'the conscientious observance of our 'duty resulting from the fear of God,' and in this acceptation, is equivalent to the term *religion*. Now to the prevalence of this principle, the wise king of Israel ascribes, in a great measure, the flourishing state of a nation or polity. To illustrate his sentiment is the scope of the present discourse.

Ye ask, 'How is religion conducive to the exaltation and 'felicity of the body-politic or nation?' I answer, It conduces to this end in these four different ways: By the tendency and extent of its laws; by the nature and importance of its sanctions; by the assistance which it gives to the civil powers, both in securing fidelity, and in discovering truth; and by the positive enforcement of equity and good government on the rulers, and of obedience and submission on the people. Let it be observed, that though, in this discourse, I speak of religion in general, I am always to be understood as referring to the Christian religion in particular. It is indeed true, that even those religions, if we may call them so, many or most of whose fundamental

principles are erroneous, may, in a political view, be considered as beneficial, and infinitely preferable to Atheism, or total irreligion; yet it is certain, that in this as well as in other more important respects, no form of superstition can bear to be compared with that religion which alone has God for its author, and the greatest good of mankind, both temporal and eternal, for its object.

I proceed to make a few observations, and your time will admit but a few, on the four heads of discourse now mentioned. They are so many topics of argument, by which the great truth contained in my text, That *righteousness*, or true and practical religion, *exalteth a nation*, is at once both explained and evinced.

I. I begin with showing, that religion conduces to the welfare of the community, by the tendency and extent of its laws.

Concerning the tendency of the laws of the Christian institution, it is impossible for an intelligent person to doubt, that it is to promote the happiness of human society. The whole of practical religion is summed up by the great author and finisher of our faith in two fundamental precepts *. The *first* enjoins us *to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind.* The *second*, which is like to the first, and founded on it, enjoins us *to love our neighbour as ourselves.* The apostle Paul accordingly has, with great propriety, comprehended all social duties in the latter of these precepts. *Owe no man any thing*, says he †, *but to love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* To the same purpose our blessed Lord ‡ has comprised all the duties incumbent on every man to every other, under this excellent moral maxim, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this*, he adds, *is the law and the prophets.* It would be mispending

* Matth. xxii. 37—40. † Rom. xii. 8—10. ‡ Matth. vii. 12.

time to attempt to prove, that the strict observance of these precepts would both prevent the greatest evils which disturb the peace of society, and would conduce, in the highest degree, to promote mutual confidence, harmony, and good-will, among fellow-citizens. This is a truth so evident, that, as far as I can learn, it has never been denied or disputed by any. It has only been regretted, that we have so few examples of the influence of precepts so ineffably important and divine. But this very regret implies a conviction, or rather is a confession of their goodness, and of the happy effect which religion must have on society, wherever it meets with a suitable reception.

I include under this head not only the tendency, but the extent of the laws of religion. In regard to their tendency, there is a manifest co-operation with the municipal laws of all well-governed countries, whereby the persons, the lives, the liberty, and the property, of the people are secured from unjust invasion or attack. But in point of extent, the difference lies here. It is the aim of religion to remove the causes of those calamities by which society is injured, whilst human laws reach only their destructive consequences. These crop the weeds, but the other plucks them up by the roots. The only things which are, or can be, subject to man's jurisdiction, are what we call *overt acts*, that is, external and discoverable actions; the principles of the heart, out of which are the issues of life, are subject to God's jurisdiction, and to it only. There is a weakness or imperfection inherent in the former, and incurable inasmuch as it necessarily results from the imperfection of human knowledge and of human power. It is solely by the influence of religion, that this deficiency can, in any measure, be supplied. When the divine testimony is received with faith and love, it applies medicine to the spiritual diseases, and gives health and vigour to the soul. Human laws, for the protection of peace and good order in society, may concur with the divine law * in saying, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; but it is only the word of God † that teacheth us, *That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.* By the former, indeed, we are commanded to do no murder: From the latter ‡ we learn, that *whosoever*

* Exod. xx. 14. † Matth. v. 28. ‡ 1 John iii. 15.

hateth his brother is, in God's account, *a murderer*. It suits the language even of human lawgivers to say, "Thou shalt not steal:" But it belongs peculiarly to the divine authority * to add, *Thou shalt not covet*. This character of *religion*, under the title of "the word of God," is admirably well delineated by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. *The word of God*, says he †, *is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Thus it is evident, that religion, in respect both of the salutary tendency of its precepts, and of their extent, as reaching to the purifying of the heart, must, wheresoever it is believed, conduce greatly even to the temporal happiness and flourishing state of the community.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to show, that religion eminently promotes the same end by the nature and importance of its sanctions, the rewards which it promises, and the punishments which it threatens.

It has been often pleaded, on this topic, and sometimes with an air of triumph, that though the sanction of human laws are but temporal, and those of religion mostly eternal; yet as the former are visible and more immediate, and the latter invisible and more remote, the former have incomparably greater influence on the generality of men than the latter. But were we to admit this as a fact, it does not overturn my argument. In every statute of man which does not contradict the commandment of God, religion leaves the human and legal sanctions to operate with their full force upon its votaries. If its peculiar sanctions are admitted to be of any weight at all, (and it can hardly be thought that they will not weigh with some) they are just so much weight superadded to the other, and contributing to the same end, the public welfare.

But as to the comparative influence of the two kinds of sanctions, those of religion and those of the legislature, it appears to best advantage when the laws of religion and the laws of the state, unfortunately run counter to each other. This was ac-

* Exod. xx. 17. † Heb. iv. 12.

tually the case of the primitive Christians, when Christianity was persecuted, and the very profession of it declared criminal. Were there not some, were there not even multitudes, who *then* showed the infinite superiority of its sanctions over all that human art and malice could set in opposition to them? Were there not then those whose conduct demonstrated, that they had thoroughly imbibed that great lesson given by their master, *Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell* ?* Were there not then those who showed, in the most convincing manner, that the lively hope of a glorious immortality can surmount the horror of instant death, accompanied with ignominy and torture? Religion and the state were then at variance. And though the conflict was purely defensive on the part of the former, and what, to judge after the manner of men, we should pronounce very unequal, inasmuch as she never, even in self-defence, employed the arm of flesh, those earthly weapons which were so cruelly used against her, her patience and perseverance were at length crowned with victory, and, notwithstanding her many disadvantages, she triumphed over all opposition. Now if religion was then, though a passive, yet so formidable an adversary, when forced, against her natural bent, to take an adverse part, have we not reason to believe, that when, in conformity to her native disposition, she is engaged in the same cause, she will prove an active and a powerful ally?

But it is not barely by the addition of the sanctions of heaven, hell, and eternity, to those of the municipal laws, founded in the principles of natural justice, that religion co-operates with the civil powers, promoting the same end, the peace of society: there are many cases wherein the sanctions of the latter have no influence at all, whilst those of the former operate with all their force. 'It is a very small matter,' said an ancient Heathen †, 'to be good in the legal sense.' The reason is, those transgressions which come under the cognisance of human tribunals, must be in a particular manner circumstanced, so as to be comprehended in the precise definition which the legislature has adopted. Hence it happens, as every judicious person

* Luke xii. 4, 5. † Exiguum est quiddam ad legem bonum esse.—*Seneca.*

will admit, that a man may be notoriously a consummate villain, a disobedient son, an unnatural father, a cruel husband, a tyrannical master, a litigious neighbour, and in every respect a bad citizen; whom nevertheless no human laws can reach. Nor is there a possibility of redressing this grievance in any polity, but by what would prove a still greater grievance, by conferring on magistrates and judges such a latitude of discretionary power as would render them quite arbitrary. The case is very different with the sanctions of religion, which always regard the motive, the disposition, and the intention of the agent, more than the outward circumstances of the action.

Further, though the crime should be such as to fall exactly under the description of the law, it may be so secretly committed as to elude the eye even of the most vigilant magistracy; and where, in that case, is the curb against the blackest guilt, if none is to be found in religion? Our judges, being men, are necessarily weak and imperfect. They require informations, the examination of witnesses, and other sorts of evidence. In religion, the same just, omniscient, and all-perfect being, is both the witness and the judge. How admirably is the strength of this motive illustrated in the story of Joseph? He seems to have been secure from all human detection. But he well knew, that there was a witness greater than man, from whose all-seeing eye it was impossible he should be screened. *How can I do this great wickedness*, said he, *and sin against God* *?

It is but too evident, that in this licentious age we have few such examples. But what does the smallness of the number evince? Not the want of efficacy in the sanctions of religion to prove a check on men's actions, but the want of religion amongst us to supply by its sanctions a check on ours. It does not refute the position of the royal Preacher, that *by the blessing of the upright the city is exalted* †; it only shows, that there are few upright in the city to exalt and bless it. Religion operates solely by faith. It has no influence on any, farther than it is believed. We cannot then wonder, that, in those walks of life wherein scepticism and infidelity abound, we should find the utmost dissoluteness of manners. We might justly wonder, were it otherwise. A corrupt tree cannot produce good fruit, no

* Gen. xxxix. 9. † Prov. xi. 11.

more than a good tree can produce evil fruit. What diabolical pains and assiduity have not sometimes been employed, especially among those of superior rank, to extirpate every religious principle from the minds of females, whose more delicate sensibility renders them more susceptible than men, of the influence of religion? And what has been the consequence of this, which is indeed the worst species of debauchery? In too many such an open disregard to the most sacred engagements, such shameless profligacy as, in that sex, was without example in this country in former ages. But those men have no title to complain of the effects, who, by their dissolute example, and still more by their impious conversation, have proved the principal cause of the evil.

Again, where is the check but from the sanctions of religion, on those despotic princes who have raised themselves by their arms, or have been raised by a servile people, above all law and controul? To such men religion, and religion only, can be of power enough to curb the violence of the passions. And where there is no religion, there is no restraint. Every considerate person will admit, that the conclusion formed by Abraham *, that there could be no security for his wife's person, or his own life, against the unbridled desires of an arbitrary prince, who might do what he pleased, was a just and natural conclusion from the principle assumed by him, That there was *no fear of God in that place.*

For, let it be observed further, that religion is not entirely without influence, even on those who are not intitled to be called religious. It deters from the commission of crimes, by its threatenings, those whom its charms have not allured to the practice of virtue. An excellent illustration of the influence of religion, in the case of absolute monarchs, is given by a late writer of great genius and penetration. 'A prince who loves 'religion, and fears it, is a tame lion, which yields to the hand 'that strokes him, and to the voice that soothes him. He who 'fears religion, and hates it, is an untamed lion, which bites the 'chain that restrains him from throwing himself upon the pas-'sengers. He who has no religion, is that terrible animal, un-'subdued, and at large, which is not sensible of his liberty, but 'when he tears in pieces and devours †.'

* Gen. xx. 11.

† De l'Esprit de Loix, liv. xxiv. ch. 2.

Permit me to add on this head, that though the principal sanctions of religion are future and eternal, these are not its only sanctions. There are some which are present and temporal. The approbation and the reproach of conscience; a belief in the superintendency of providence, in the course of which God is often pleased to defeat the secret machinations of the wicked, making the mischief intended for another to return upon the head of the contriver; and not seldom to bring unexpectedly to light the hidden things of dishonesty, to the disgrace of those who were the perpetrators, are, though regarding the present life only, not to be considered as entirely without effect.

Thus I have shown, in the second place, that religion promotes the peace and prosperity of the nation, by the nature and importance of its sanctions.

III. I maintain, thirdly, That it promotes the same end, by the aid which it gives to the civil powers, both in securing fidelity, and in discovering truth.

Men's convictions of the weakness of all human ties, when opposed to some powerful inducement from interest, ambition, or sensuality; their consciousness how little in case of such a competition, faithfulness could be secured by any promise, or veracity by any protestation, has made them universally borrow help from religion, to furnish them with an additional security in aid of human engagements and allegations. Hence the origin of oaths, not only of fidelity to a trust, and of allegiance, but also in matters of evidence, in bearing testimony, both in civil causes and in criminal. Now, an oath is in fact a solemn appeal to God, who knows all things, who has distinguished himself by the title *of the God of truth*, and who is the avenger of all deceit and wickedness. By connecting with the affirmation a declared sense of the divine presence and justice, a lie is loaded with the guilt of impiety; and that which would otherwise have been considered, though unjustly, as but a venial trespass, a slight departure from the duty we owe to others, is viewed in the more attrocious light of an affront to the Majesty of Heaven, whose omniscience appears to be directly insulted, and whose omnipotence appears to be defied.

I do indeed most readily admit, that as in every lie there is an infringement of the law of God, a conscientious man will, from motives of piety as well as justice, be restrained from it. He knows, that all sins whatever, even those called sins of the second table, which are committed more directly against his neighbour, strike ultimately against God, the supreme legislator, of whose law they are the violations; and for this reason I should not hesitate to pronounce of a truly good man, that his word is equivalent to his oath. But, alas! we have too much reason to think, that this integrity is not so common as might be wished. How far it is, where found, to be attributed to a sense of religion, is submitted to the candid and judicious; but, in regard to the bulk of mankind, we may safely affirm, that though religion meets not with that reception which can empower it to influence the whole tenor of their conduct, it so far impresses their imagination as is sufficient for restraining them from the perpetration of crimes, especially such crimes as are universally accounted the most flagitious. Now in this number *perjury* is always classed. If even then this weak impression of a power superior to human, this very imperfect degree of the fear of God, were, by the universal prevalence of that Atheism, and contempt of religion, which are visibly making rapid progress amongst us, and already infecting the lower classes of men, (if it were, I say) totally banished the land, it may be referred to the determination of those whom worldly considerations only can affect, whether this event, which appears so desirable to many, would conduce to the honour and purity of our families, the security of our properties, liberties, and lives. Amongst an unprincipled people, in whom is no belief of Deity or Providence, heaven, hell, or eternity, can we be so vain as to imagine that there would be much regard to the ties of truth and justice?

On those, whose birth, education, or circumstances, have brought them into the upper walks of life, it has been often thought, that a sense of *honour* would have considerable influence, and prove an effectual restraint at least from some vices, though there were very little sense of *virtue*, and none at all of *religion*. But, as far as I can recollect, it has been admitted by the sages of all times and countries, that without a sense of

religion of some sort or other, there could be no dependance upon the vulgar.

In respect of what is called *a sense of honour*, I beg leave to remark, that as this principle does not regard the moral pravity of the action, nor yet its pernicious consequences either to individuals or to society, but solely the disesteem wherein it happens to be among those called *the fashionable world*; so there are some of the most enormous crimes, which, in their effects, prove ruinous to individuals, and subversive of the peace of families, from which this principle of honour affords no protection whatever. It were easy to show, did time permit at present, what horrid injustice, ingratitude, treachery, cruelty, falseness, (for, in affairs of gallantry, what man of fashion thinks there is any thing dishonourable in the breach of vows?) nay, what worthlessness, in many respects, may be perfectly compatible with the unaccountable character, the offspring of pride and caprice, A MAN OF HONOUR. And even in those few cases wherein something like moral qualities, such as veracity and courage, come within its precincts, as it always has respect to the opinions of others, the sentiments in vogue; so wherever absolute secrecy can be secured, it is totally disarmed. Indeed, in regard to all those vices which may be perpetrated in such a manner as to elude discovery, and give a defiance to the most inquisitive curiosity, where can be the curb on persons of any class, if all sense of *virtue* and *religion* are wanting?

'True,' say some, 'if both are wanting; but will not the former prove sufficient without the latter?' I shall only answer, That though I will not presume to say what in every supposable situation would possibly influence a human character, I will venture to pronounce, that if ye make a separation between those two which God and conscience have joined together, and divorce *religion* from *virtue*, ye will find ye have deprived the latter of her steadiest friend, her best comforter, her firmest support. And whatever may be the pretences or appearances of human virtue, when destitute of religion, I should not account him a very wise man who would put equal confidence in her, as in what Job * denominates man's true wisdom, namely, *the fear of the Lord.*

* Job xxviii. 28.

'Ay, but there are so many hypocrites that wear the mask of 'religion, that one is not safe to place any trust here at all.' True, some such characters are still to be found, though hypocrisy cannot be accounted the vice of the age. And do we not also sometimes find villains under the mask of honesty? Now, if no person in his senses ever imagined, that the detection of villainy brought a discredit on honest men, or a suspicion that there is no honesty in the world, can any thing but the grossest prejudice lead us to conclude unfavourably of religion, because of the detection of some hypocrites? The standard coin never sinks in our estimation, in consequence of the many discoveries that are daily made of artful but worthless counterfeits.

On the whole, therefore, agreeably to what I proposed, in the third place, to prove, we see how necessary the aid of religion is for securing fidelity to engagements, and for the discovery of truth in judicatories, both in civil causes and in criminal.

IV. I come now, in the fourth and last place, to observe the utility of religion to a state, by the positive enforcement which it gives of equity and good government on the rulers, and of obedience and subjection on the people.

In regard to the first part of this head, I have, in some measure, prevented myself, when speaking of the sanctions of religion, and showing, that they are the more necessary in the case of despotic sovereigns, inasmuch as being by their station raised above controul, there is no check upon them beside religion. I shall only, therefore, at this time, with all possible brevity, point out the general views that revelation gives of all human governors. It is this which reminds them, that magistracy is a trust, for the faithful discharge whereof they are accountable to God, who in the course of his providence has conferred it on them; that consequently they *who rule over men, ought to be just, ruling in the fear of God*; that they *judge not for man* ultimately, *but for the Lord, who is with them in the judgment* *. Is it a disadvantage to mankind, that those who are supreme here, and uncontrolable, are taught to reflect, that

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.; 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7.

they must themselves appear hereafter, in the quality of subjects, before the tribunal of him who is *higher than the highest;* and that their conduct, especially in ruling and judging, must undergo a strict scrutiny, under the eye of *the King of kings and Lord of lords*, that unerring judge, *who is no respecter of persons, with whom there is no iniquity*, and, in whose tremendous presence the distinctions which obtain amongst us mortals, of high and low, mighty and weak, rich and poor, are all entirely levelled? Nay, would it not, on the contrary, be of unspeakable advantage to the world, that all magistrates, lawgivers and judges, were firmly persuaded of these important truths?

On the other hand, if a pious sense of religion is the best security for good government on the part of rulers, it is also the most effectual means of ensuring submission and obedience on the part of subjects. Without some impressions of this kind, it would be difficult to persuade men that they are under any tie to obedience and subjection to others of their own species, when any strong temptation from interest or ambition should incline them to revolt. Their submission would be such only as necessity compelled, not as a sense of duty disposed them to yield. Consequently they could have no motive to restrain them from rebellion, whenever it should appear they could rebel successfully. But religion enforces our allegiance, not from the fear of the magistrate, (a motive however which it leaves in full force) but from a principle of conscience towards God; *not only for wrath*, says Paul *, *but* FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE. And Peter †, to the same purpose, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*, FOR THE LORD'S SAKE. *For so is the will of God, that with well-doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

THUS I have endeavoured briefly to illustrate and evince the important truth laid down in my text, That *righteousness*, or religion, *exalteth a nation.* I have shown, that in all the four ways enumerated,—to wit, by the tendency and extent of its laws; by the nature and importance of its sanctions; by the aid it gives to the civil powers, in securing fidelity, and in the discovery of truth; and by the positive enforcement of good government on rulers, and of obedience on subjects,—it conduces

* Rom. xiii. 5. † 1 Pet. ii. 13, 15.

to the temporal good of the society. This, I acknowledge, is comparatively but a secondary consideration; for what is all worldly and temporary prosperity, compared with that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory which shall hereafter be revealed? But though it be a consideration much inferior to the other, yet as holy writ occasionally directs our attention to it, we are certain, that it ought not to be overlooked. For had present advantages been totally unworthy the Christian's notice, the great apostle of the Gentiles had never thought it worth while to observe to us *, that *godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*; adding, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.*

I SHALL conclude with subjoining these two inferences.

First, If the above representation of things be just, the secular powers ought to give all possible countenance to religion, the principal support of their authority, and to the ordinances of divine worship, the principal external means by which a sense of religion is propagated and preserved among mankind. If men in the more elevated ranks of life, those men especially who are vested with a share of either the legislative or the executive power, should display, in their conduct or conversation, a contempt of our Christian profession, they would not show themselves more plainly to be bad Christians in the common acceptation of the term, than to be (what possibly they would like worse to be accounted) injudicious magistrates, and ill affected citizens, and consequently in all respects bad members of the commonwealth. We all know how prone inferiors are to imitate their superiors. And such is the depravity of human nature, that the vices of the great are much more readily copied than their virtues. Every man (whatever his condition in the world may be) is obliged to be exemplary; but the obligation is much stronger on those whose example, by reason of their exalted stations, is capable of being much more beneficial, or much more hurtful, than that of ordinary men.

Secondly, If religion is of such indispensable necessity for the support of civil society, what shall we think of the patriotism or

* 1 Tim. iv. 8, 6.

public virtue of those who assiduously endeavour, as far as their influence extends, to undermine its fundamental principles, and set men loose from all its obligations? Do not such appear to be as real enemies to their country, as to Christianity? Some perhaps would not scruple to add, enemies to human nature. Let people but coolly ask themselves, If our free-thinkers, our speculative and philosophical latitudinarians, should succeed in the dark design they seem sometimes so zealously to prosecute; and if the disbelief of the principles, and the disregard to the rites of religion, which already appear in too many, and plainly show their evil influence on the morals of the age, should, agreeably to the ordinary course of things, descend to the lowest ranks, and become universal, what will be the consequence? Who can hesitate to answer, The utter fall of religion? Let it not be pretended, that there is no danger from the reasonings of the sceptic, because these are far above the comprehension of vulgar understandings. For those men will fondly adopt the conclusion, who are incapable of apprehending aught of the premises. The authority of great names among the learned will ever be to them a sufficient foundation. And if once our faith is subverted, is any so blind as to imagine, religion will fall alone? Can her disgrace fail to be accompanied by that of virtue and good manners? In such general ruin,—what will be safe? Can we be vain enough to imagine,—that our laws and liberties, or any part of the constitution, will long survive? The subject is too full of horror to expiate on. I leave it to the serious reflection of my hearers.

THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND IMPORTANCE, OF THE DUTY OF ALLEGIANCE:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT ABERDEEN,

DECEMBER 12th, 1776,

BEING THE FAST DAY APPOINTED BY THE KING, ON ACCOUNT OF THE REBELLION IN AMERICA.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is not of any importance to the Public to be made acquainted with the motives which have induced the Author to publish the following Sermon. He will only say, that he had no such intention when he composed and preached it. But there are two points on which, he doubts not, many readers will think, he stands in need of an apology. Of them he begs a candid attention to what follows, as the best that he can offer.

It may be said, that little can be expected *new*, especially in a sermon, on a subject which has now so long engrossed the public attention, and engaged many able and ingenious writers on both sides. The Author readily admits the truth of this remark. If there be any thing here that can be called *new*, it is the consideration of what our religion teaches to be the duty of Christians in circumstances like ours. This topic has not been touched, at least in any of those writings which he has read on the present controversy. But though there be little or nothing *new* in the thoughts, every author has his peculiar manner and arrangement. One manner is better adapted to one set of readers, another to another. If the sentiments then be just, and if they be arranged and expressed with tolerable perspicuity, it may be hoped that there are some to whom they will be useful.

The second point on which the author finds he must apologize for himself, is his entering at all on such a subject in a *sermon*. Indeed the prejudices of some are so strong on this article, that he scarcely expects that any thing he has to advance will entirely remove them. The cry is, 'What has the ministers of the gospel to do with matters of state, or Christianity 'with human politics?' The ambiguity of the terms *politics* and *matters of state* gives a specious appearance to the objection. The church, no doubt, would be a very improper place for the discussion of many points relating to national interest, and of questions of jurisprudence, which might be very pertinent in

the cabinet or the senate. But when a question arises that affects the title of the magistrate to demand, and the obligation of the subject to yield, obedience: If the precepts of the gospel at all concern our conduct as *citizens*, it must be the duty of a Christian pastor to point out to his flock what these precepts command, and what they prohibit.

Our Saviour in his last charge to his apostles, expressly enjoined them to teach all those whom they should convert and baptize, *to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them* *. Now, it is as really a commandment of our Lord, that we should *render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*, as that we should *render to God the things that are God's* †. Have not his apostles accordingly, Paul and Peter in particular, given most explicit directions on this very head? Paul not only recommends this duty himself to Christian congregations, but in the instructions he gives to Titus, who was also a minister, specifies it by name as an important duty, which he ought not to neglect recommending to his people. *Put them in mind*, says he, *to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates* ‡. Can we then think ourselves excused in omitting to teach and enforce so momentous a duty, so strongly recommended to us both by the example and by the precept both of our Lord and of his apostles? In the general order Christ gave his disciples to teach the people to observe all things, whatsoever he had commanded them, were they at liberty to make an exception of this?

Some perhaps will reply, 'Were the duty recommended only 'in general terms by the minister, as a Christian duty, no ob-'jection could reasonably be made: But to enter into a detail 'of facts, or an argumentative discussion on such a subject, is 'what appears unsuitable to the place.' To this the Author has only to answer, The manner, whether general or particular, derives its suitableness entirely from the occasion and circumstances. When people regularly do what they ought in any instance, and when their minds are in no danger of being perverted by false principles, it is perhaps enough to remark their obligations passingly. But the case is different, when by misrepresentations of fact, or by sophistical arguments, their minds

* Matth. xxviii. 20. † Matth. xxii. 21. ‡ Tit. iii. 1.

begin to be alienated from their duty, and they learn to *call evil good, and good evil, to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.* It is then the business of the preacher, if preaching be not a mere matter of form, to do what he can to inform them better, both as to the fact, and as to the argument. Can then the observance of the duty we owe to magistrates, be an unseasonable subject at present, when so many are at such uncommon pains (some doubtless through mistake, and some through ill design) to undermine it?

The *pulpit* without question would be an improper place for canvassing the economical regulations, which might properly be adopted in the government of families. But if tenets should be advanced, and warmly recommended, totally subversive of the honour due from children to their parents, and of the obedience due from servants to their masters, would he deserve the character of a minister of Christ, who chose to continue silent, and under the silly pretext, that the pulpit was not intended for discussing family affairs, would take no concern in the controversy? Shall we find men that are indefatigable in distributing *poison*, and shall not those who have it in their power, be at some pains to administer the *antidote?*

It has in like manner been urged, that 'Under these plau-'sible pretences, the *pulpit* hath sometimes been made the in-'strument of raising *sedition*, and of doing the greatest mischief 'to the public.' The charge is indeed but too true. But is that a good reason for not employing it for the contrary purpose of inculcating *allegiance* and *loyalty?* The pulpit has also been often employed in the service of *error.* Shall it therefore never be used for the advancement of *truth?* It has often been perverted to be instrumental in kindling *persecution.* Shall it therefore be accounted improper to use it in recommending *the moderation, the meekness, and the gentleness of Christ?* Besides, will those who abuse the pulpit, by employing it to a bad purpose, be the less disposed to do so, because nobody dares oppose them from the pulpit?

From the manner in which some talk of the business of a preacher, one would imagine, that in their apprehensions, he ought ever to be occupied (as preachers have been but too often

occupied) in *doating about questions and strifes of words*, discussing all the futile logomachies of the schools, which gender contention, envy, bigotry, and wrath, but *minister not to godly edifying*, to pious and practical instruction.

The Author begs leave to add, that he hopes the doctrine here maintained may be of some service, independently of the American disputes which have occasioned its publication. There is a real danger arising from the loose and republican principles now so openly professed, and so assiduously disseminated, through the British isles; which should they still make progress, as they seem to have done for some years past, might, after the present controversy is settled and forgotten, involve this country in the most direful calamities. On the other hand, he is happy to observe that this quarrel has excited some person of great learning and penetration, fully capable of doing justice to the subject, to examine more narrowly than had been done before, into the origin, nature, and end of *civil government* *. It may be expected as the consequence, that the wild schemes of our political visionaries, for there are visionaries in politics as well as in religion, will in due time be properly exposed, and at length abandoned by every body.

* The public has been promised by an eminent writer, one entirely equal to the subject, an examination of Mr. Locke's *Theory of Government*. It is earnestly wished by many, that an *enquiry* so useful in itself, and so peculiarly seasonable at present, may not be unnecessarily deferred.

SERMON IV.

PROV. XXIV. 21.—*Meddle not with them that are given to change.*

OUR religion teaches us to consider all afflictions as chastisements for sin, and as mercifully intended by our heavenly Father to bring the afflicted to reflection and repentance. National calamities we are taught to regard as the punishments of national vices, and as warnings to the people to bethink themselves, and reform. *In the day of adversity consider*, is an admonition equally apposite, as applied to individuals, and to nations.

When the trouble itself, whether private or public, is the immediate and natural consequence of particular vices, it is more especially a call to examine into those vices which are the direct source of our calamities, that by the grace of God we may forsake and avoid them. Thus a bad state of health caused by debauchery, specially warns the suffering person of the necessity of temperance in the indulgence of appetite. And the miseries of a civil war, whether incurred by immoderate stretches of power on the one side, or produced by a wanton abuse of liberty on the other, are loud and particular calls to the correction of these enormities.

If this be a just representation, no Christian can reasonably doubt that our present distressful and threatening circumstances in regard to America, ought to be thus viewed by every British subject on both sides of the Atlantic. War of every kind points more directly to the depravity of our minds and the corruption of our manners, than do those public calamities, famine, pestilence, and earthquake, which are considered as proceeding immediately from the hand of God. They are all to be regarded as the punishments, but not as the natural effects of sin. Whereas war is to be viewed equally in both lights. *Whence come wars and fightings amongst you*, says James, *come they*

not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members * ? It is within the human breast that this mighty mischief is conceived. There the fire is lighted up, which afterwards bursting forth sets the world on flame.

In every war, then, foreign or domestic, there is on one side or the other, not seldom on both, some immorality or guilt which is the direct cause. The superintendency of Providence is doubtless to be acknowledged in this, as in every other event. And therefore affliction of every kind ought to excite us to self-examination, prayer, and repentance. But those which people more directly bring upon themselves, ought to lead them to inquire into the immediate cause, that so the present evil may, as far as depends on them, be soon remedied, and such a proper sense of their duty attained, as may at least be some security, that they will not be instrumental in fomenting the latent mischief, but will, on the contrary, do what they can, to check its progress. Besides, to entertain just notions on these subjects is one of the surest means of guarding men against the like evils in time to come.

Not indeed that wars of any kind, and especially intestine wars, always spring from opinion or principle. Their primary and ordinary source is much more properly represented in the words of the inspired writer, to be our *lusts* that *war in our members.* It is men's avarice, ambition, or revenge. At the same time it must be owned, that the first movers in such commotions are but *few*, the bulk of their followers, misled by their artifices and misrepresentations, drive on blindfold, as they are stimulated, not knowing what they do. Nothing therefore can more expose people to be the dupes of wicked and designing men, than either to have no principles at all on this subject, or to entertain wrong principles. *The few* can do nothing without *the many.* The former generally are hurried on by their passions, the latter by the erroneous notions which those who find their account in deceiving them, are indefatigable in sowing and cultivating. For this reason, if the gross of the people be in the wrong, they are more to be pitied than condemned, for they often do the greatest mischief with the best intentions imaginable. Like Paul before his conversion, they have *a zeal* for

* James iv. 1.

God and for their country, but it is *not according to knowledge.* Like him also, many of them, we may reasonably believe, would act a contrary part, if they should come to be convinced of their error. When people are gone a certain length in an evil course, we see from experience that it is next to impossible to reclaim or convince them. It is consequently one of the best offices that we can do to our countrymen and fellow-Christians, when pernicious errors begin to be diffused, and to be plausibly, or at least popularly supported, to use our utmost endeavours in the way of prevention, by propagating and defending what both reason and Scripture show to be the truth.

This consideration, you will readily suppose, has led me to make choice of these words of Solomon as the ground of my discourse, *Meddle not with them that are given to change.* Our gracious Sovereign has very properly called us on this occasion, to humble ourselves before the divine Majesty, to implore his merciful interposition in our favour, that, being warned by the tremendous judgments of a civil war raging in the colonies, we may be induced to repent of our sins, amend our lives, and thus avert the divine anger: I judged, therefore, that I could not better employ a small portion of a day set apart for so pious a purpose, than in arming you against those errors in particular, which have contributed so much to our present calamities; and in showing the obligations which as men, as citizens, and as Christians, you lie under to give obedience to the powers which Providence has set over you, and *not to meddle with them that are given to change;* that is, to avoid giving your countenance or aid, either by speech or by action, to the measures of those who would, on slight pretexts, subvert all established order, and throw every thing into confusion.

I am not ignorant that it may plausibly be urged against the propriety of discussing these points in this audience, that *very few* of *us* can be charged with entertaining principles tending to vindicate the resistance made to authority in the remote parts of the British empire. In general, therefore, we need not a refutation of opinions which we do not hold. The assertion I acknowledge to be just in point of fact, and rejoice that on the best grounds I can affirm that it is. But I am far from thinking it conclusive in point of argument. Though there be *few,*

there are *some.* And such writings as, in my judgment, instil and propagate the most unchristian and most dangerous doctrines on this subject, are daily circulated amongst us. *The few* may in process of time grow to be *the many.* The greatest ills are often inconsiderable in their beginning; and sometimes the most memorable revolutions may be traced up to very slight causes. Frequent *misrepresentations* and clamours breed discontent. *Discontent* gradually produces disaffection. *Disaffection,* long continued, settles into *disloyalty;* and this last waits but an opportunity to bring forth *rebellion.* Preventive remedies, it is well known, are commonly more effectual than corrective ones. And often, had the proper medicines been taken in time, those diseases might have been cured, which, allowed through neglect to become inveterate, baffle the art of the physician. Besides, the medicine I mean to administer, is of that safe kind, which, if it do no service, or be not necessary, will do no hurt.

It is only by the instruction and reformation of particulars, however small a part each is of the whole, that the general instruction and reformation can be effected. And the national sentiments are no other than those which prevail with the majority of the individuals of whom the nation is composed. Let us then, in the present great national contest, inquire impartially where the radical error lies; for that there is an error somewhere, is allowed on both sides.

Now the better we are informed in the rights of magistracy in general, and in the chief circumstances of the present case in particular, there is the greater probability that our conduct shall be regulated by the obligations we lie under, and that it shall be steady and uniform. On these two topics, therefore, *the rights of magistracy,* and *the grounds of the present colonial war,* I purpose, with the aid of Heaven, to offer a few observations.

THE precept in my text, *Meddle not with them that are given to change,* evidently prohibits us from favouring innovations in matters of government, or concurring in violent and irregular measures, for the purpose of effecting some change either in the governors or in the form of government. Such alterations or amendments in the laws as may be regularly and constitutionally

introduced, and may be conducive to the improvement of the body politic, are by no means comprehended in the prohibition given by this sage monarch. It is, on the contrary, the duty of every one in office, to exert the power which the constitution gives him, in such a way as will most promote the public welfare, correcting whatever is amiss, and improving whatever is found defective. The precept contained in my text may no doubt be transgressed either by the *governors* or by the *governed*. It is with regard to the latter, that I intend at this time principally to consider it: And for this end I must beg your patient attention to the following remarks.

First, It ought to be remembered, that the general precept to be observed by the people in regard to their rulers is, to obey them. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers*, says Paul, and *He who resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*. Again, *Be ye subject therefore, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake* *. To the same purpose the apostle Peter, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* He adds, *For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men* †.

'Are we then to conclude, that resistance to governors is in 'all cases unlawful, and that whatever part they act, however 'oppressive and tyrannical, the governed have no choice but 'obedience and submission?' I do by no means affirm this. There are few general rules that admit no exception. Consider the commandment, *Thou shalt not kill* ‡. Does it import that in no possible circumstances one man is permitted to take the life of another? No certainly. Notwithstanding this unlimited prohibition, we all allow, and have sufficient warrant from Scripture for allowing, that in several cases, as in the judicial punishment of crimes, in self-defence, and in lawful war, it not only may be vindicated, but is even a duty, to deprive another of life. Nor let it be urged, that the term rendered *kill*, ought to have been translated *commit murder*; for it is certain that the Hebrew word is of as extensive signification as the English,

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 5. † 1 Pet. ii. 13—15. ‡ Exod. xx. 13.

and applied indifferently to lawful as to unlawful killing. *Children, obey your parents*, says the apostle Paul, *IN ALL THINGS*. The same injunction is also given to servants in regard to their masters *. This, one would think, excludes all exception, if words can exclude it. Yet I believe no Christian will urge, that there would be an obligation to obedience from this precept, should a parent command his child, or a master command his servant, *to steal*. I shall offer but one other instance, an instance which nearly resembles the point in hand. Our Lord has given us this express prohibition, *Resist not evil* †, and that without any restriction whatever. Yet if this were to be understood by Christians as admitting no exception, it would among them abolish magistracy itself. For what is *magistracy*, but, if I may be allowed the expression, a bulwark erected for the defence of the society, and consequently for the very purpose of *resisting evil*, for repelling injuries offered or committed, either by foreign enemies from without, or by its own corrupted members from within?—Therefore, unless the nature of the thing require it, we cannot conclude so much from a general proposition.

And that the nature of the thing does not in this case require it, is manifest from this consideration, that government obliges us in conscience to obedience and submission, only because it is the *means* appointed by Providence, for promoting one of the most important ends, *the good of society*. If this institution therefore should, in any instance, so far degenerate into tyranny, that all the miseries of a civil war consequent on resistance, would be less terrible than the slavery and oppression suffered under the government, then, and only then, could resistance be said to be either incumbent as a duty, or even lawful. It cannot reasonably be denied that the principle of self-defence is as natural and justifiable in communities, as individuals.

Thus much I thought it necessary to premise, for the sake of truth, and that it might not be imagined, I mean to argue on the slavish, unnatural, and justly-exploded principles of *passive obedience* and *non-resistance*; principles whose manifest tendency is the establishment and support of despotism. At

* Col. iii. 20, 22. † Matth. v. 39.

the same time it is but doing justice to the argument, to take notice, that if there be a danger on the one hand, of tying the knot of allegiance, which binds the subject to the sovereign, too hard, there is no less danger on the other, of making it too loose. Nothing is more common than for people to run from one extreme to another. We have indeed happily abandoned the absurd tenets above-mentioned, but is there no reason to dread that many in this island are running precipitately into the opposite error? an error whose direct tendency is *anarchy*, which commonly terminates in usurpation and tyranny, the very thing proposed to be avoided by resistance. That we may be properly guarded against so fatal a mistake, I hope, my brethren, to be indulged on this head a little further, whilst I consider, as briefly as possible, the extent both of the precept and of the exception.

The *extent* of the precept to obey governors can only be ascertained by attending to the *end* of government. Now the end of government is, as was observed, the *good* of society, especially of the governed, who make the major part. Paul, speaking of the magistrate, says, *He is the minister of God to thee for good* *. It will be asked on the other side, 'Can this 'consideration entitle him to obedience, when he adopts a mea-'sure, that instead of promoting the public welfare, is really 'hurtful?' That we may be furnished with a proper answer to this question, we must remark, first, that the apostle mentions the end of *magistracy*, which is the good of society, as the great foundation of allegiance, not the end of every *measure* which the magistrate may think proper to adopt. He is but a man, and therefore fallible as well as others. He is liable both to error and to vice. Many measures he may adopt that are improper; notwithstanding which, the end of the office, the *common good*, may be promoted by him. And true public spirit incites us equally, in what regards the community, to prefer the greatest of different good things and the least of different ills. Now there may be many bad measures adopted by the ruling powers, which nevertheless could not do half the mischief that would necessarily ensue from the subversion of authority. For it ought always on this subject to be taken into considera-

* Rom. xiii. 4.

tion, that resistance strikes immediately, not only against the particular measure resisted, but against the office of the magistrate, and therefore tends totally to subvert authority, and unhinge the constitution. If then by resisting, we loose, as much as in us lies, the bands of society, and introduce anarchy with all its baneful consequences, on account of any measures, the ill effects whereof are not so much to be dreaded as those wherein the nation would be involved by the dissolution of government, we run into a greater evil to avoid a less.

Let it be further observed, that in *bad* measures themselves there is a great difference. Some are denominated bad because *inexpedient*, that is, not well adapted to the end intended by them. Thus a tax may be laid on one commodity which distresses the people more, and yields less to the revenue, than if it had been laid on another. Others are termed bad because *immoral*, as when any thing is commanded contrary to the law of God. In regard to the first there cannot be a shadow of doubt. For if every man were at liberty to judge for himself how far the means adopted by his superiors were fitted to the end, and consequently how far he were obliged to give obedience to the laws, there could be no government at all. The people would be either in a state of perpetual warfare, or at perfect liberty to do as they please. If the latter were the case, it would be absurd to talk of *laws* or *orders*; the only proper terms would be *counsels* or *advices*. Among such, and only among such, it might be justly said, 'Every man is his own le-'gislator.' But this state of things (for a constitution it cannot be called) may suit the perfection of angels, who are all good and wise, but will never suit the pravity of human nature. In regard to the other sort of bad measures, where something *sinful* is enjoined, it is certain that no man is bound to yield an active obedience to a human law, which, either from the light of nature or from revelation, he is persuaded to be contrary to the divine law.—Here the maxim takes place, 'We ought to 'obey God rather than man.'

But even as to such laws, the subject is not always entitled to oppose the magistrate, by force. In the days of the apostles, the Christians submitted to any sufferings rather than give obedience to the heathen laws in favour of idolatry; yet they

neither made war upon the magistrate, nor pulled down the images, altars, and temples of idolaters. 'Is religion then 'never a sufficient ground of active opposition to the ruling pow-'ers?' That cannot justly be inferred neither. Government has for its object the *whole* society, not a separate *part*. There is therefore a great difference between what may be called an attack on the rights both natural and civil of *the whole*, such as is the religion of the community, and an infringement of the natural rights of *a few*.

A man's right to his opinions may be truly said to be both *natural* and *unalienable*. As they depend not on his will, it is not in his power to alter them. And no law is obligatory which commands a man to lie. Religious toleration therefore may justly be considered as a natural right. The two most definable, though not the only, limits to all civil laws are the *impossible* and the *immoral*. A law commanding men to believe certain religious tenets, attempts the *impossible*, and is therefore not so properly tyrannical as absurd. Laws can have no more effect on the belief or opinions of any who are capable of forming opinions, than they can have on the bodily senses. A law commanding men, under pains and penalties, to profess opinions in religion which they disbelieve, enjoins something *immoral*, and is therefore at once impious, tyrannical, and absurd. It undermines its own foundation, requiring an obedience which cannot be yielded without subverting the authority of conscience, whence all sorts of obligation, civil and religious, originate. It proposes what is in politics the greatest of absurdities, to make people *good citizens*, by making them *bad men*. But the duties enjoined by the law of nature may also be enforced by civil laws under civil sanctions. Of this kind are almost all the criminal laws in every country.

Further, there is a great difference between the submission due to measures tending to the preservation of what is established, and the submission due to measures tending to its subversion; and that without taking into consideration the goodness or the badness of the establishment. The former is favourable to public tranquillity and order, because conducing to that which the community, whether right or wrong, esteems its good. The latter is ever hardly attempted without endangering, and not

sometimes without overturning, the public tranquillity. Now as it is a principle of common sense, that a less evil should be borne to prevent a greater, so it is a fundamental principle in government, whose end is common utility, that private interest should give place to public. It holds in general therefore, that no man, no body of men, constituting but a smaller part of the community, are intitled to resist the magistrate by force in what is properly a private quarrel, even though they should think themselves, and be in fact, unjustly treated by him. For there is a very great difference between not being obliged to give an active obedience, and being intitled to make an active resistance.

I admit that cases may be supposed so atrociously barbarous, that nature would reclaim against the severity of this doctrine, and the heart of every feeling person would justify the oppressed in giving way to the impulse of that most natural and rooted principle, *self-defence*. But such cases are uncommon any where, and hardly ever to be found in free or limited governments. Yet even in such cases, the very utmost we can say is, that humanity and candour would admit the greatness of the provocation as an apology for the resistance, which would be considered as *excusable*, not regarded as incumbent. In support of authority a positive *precept* is pleaded; in support of such a resistance as has been now supposed, the utmost that could be urged is an implied *exception* resulting from extraordinary circumstances. In every case in which the rule holds, to transgress it is an invasion of the *rights of others*, not only the rights of the magistrate, but the right of the society, whose peace and order we disturb; whereas in the particular case above stated, not to avail one's self of the exception, is only to yield of *one's own right*, a thing which in most cases is entirely in one's own power.

Our duty as Christians often requires us to act this part, and to resign a private claim for the good of others. The example of our Lord teaches it, who, to avoid contention and offence, provided himself miraculously with the tribute money, when he might have pleaded a legal exemption from paying it *. To such particular cases the precept, *Resist not evil*, ought to be

* Matth. xvii. 24, &c.

understood as principally applicable. That we ought patiently to endure private injuries, rather than by endeavouring to obtain redress, hurt a more important and public interest, is alike the dictate of true patriotism and genuine Christianity. *Why do ye not rather*, says Paul to the Corinthians, *take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded*?* Rather than what? Rather than bring scandal on the Christian community, rather than breed variances amongst yourselves.

I observe further, that the cause which justifies resistance would not only need to be both *important* and *public*, but clearly and by the community *understood* to be so. It were madness in *one* or a *few*, in a case wherein the peace and felicity of ALL are concerned, to decide for the whole. The immediate mischiefs to society would be *manifest*, the remote advantages *uncertain*. Nor is it less evident, that where the case is in any degree doubtful, our only safe way is to follow the precept which enjoins obedience, and not an exception, about the existence of which we are dubious. Nor needs any other reason be assigned for this conduct, than that it is conformable to the general precept, which we are commanded to follow as our rule. As this therefore is a Christian duty in every case, unless where the exception actually obtains, it is incumbent on us in every case, unless where we perceive that the exception obtains. *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*†. There is no middle way. The divine precept is solely in favour of obedience; to disobey is in fact to decide in favour of an *exception*, which, unless it be glaring, ought never to be supposed to exist. In regard to it the law is silent. It is not of the spirit of the law to put extraordinary cases. It leaves such, from the manifest urgency and importance of the circumstances, to suggest the necessity of a deviation from the rule. *To resist* has been, with the greatest justice, styled in the body politic *a desperate remedy*, as it brings into the most eminent hazard its very existence; it would then be no other than distraction to employ it, if we were doubtful whether the disease of the state were *desperate*, or even perhaps whether she laboured under a disease or not. If disobedience and resistance are to be regarded (as by all wise and good men they have ever been regarded) as at

* 1 Cor. vi. 7. † Rom. xiv. 23.

best but necessary evils, common sense requires, that we be convinced of the necessity, before we recur to the evil *.

In these observations I have all along argued from what both reason and Scripture show to be the end of government, *public utility*, a principle sufficiently simple and intelligible, and from which alone every just limitation may easily be deduced. I have not mentioned *the original compact*, one of the hackneyed topics of writers on politics. My reason is, I neither understand the word, as applied by those writers, nor know where to find

* It does not overthrow this system, as has been objected, that the people must judge, whether in any exigency that arises, they ought to recur to resistance; nor does it follow, that they have a *right* to resist, whenever they *think* it necessary. Their right commences with the *real*, not with the *imagined*, *necessity*. They judge therefore, and must consider themselves as judging, in peril of incurring, by rash judgment, the complicated guilt of murder, rebellion, and the worst of parricides, the destruction of their country. Antecedently to every action that can be called a man's own, he must both judge and determine. But did ever any body conclude hence, that he has a right to do whatever he determines; in other words, that he cannot determine wrong? 'War is a dreadful evil.' Yet one nation has a right to make war on another *in certain cases*. Now, if there is such a right, every nation must judge for itself, when it ought to be exercised. But was it ever deduced as a consequence, that this right cannot mean less than *a right in every people to make war on every other, whenever they think it necessary?* On the contrary, 'those who involve a people in it 'needlessly,' I use the objector's own words, 'will find they have much to an-'swer for. Nothing can ever justify it, but the necessity of it,' (surely he means *real*, not *supposed*, or *pretended*, necessity, for this is never wanting) 'to secure 'some *essential* interest against unjust attacks.' Have they less to answer for who kindle a civil war, of all kinds the most dreadful. Will less serve to justify it?——In this particular, our republicans have advanced higher claims in favour of *the people*, than the votaries to the patriarchal scheme ever did in favour of *the sovereign*. The former scruple not to ascribe a real *infallibility* to the multitude. I never heard of any of the latter, however bigotted to the principle of divine, hereditary, indefeasible right, that attributed so much of divinity to the monarch. These will not hesitate to admit that a king may be a *tyrant*, though, in their judgment, it does not belong to the nation either to check, or to chastise him; whereas the former will not allow that the people ever can be *rebels*. I am hopeful, however, they will not maintain that the people every where, and in all ages, have been endowed with this *infallible* discernment of what is necessary. Will they say that the Israelites in the wilderness were possessed of it when they compelled Aaron to make the golden calf, and celebrated a festival in its honour; or when, upon hearing the report of the spies, they tumultuously clamoured for the election of a captain to lead them back to Egypt? Yet they seem to have been almost unanimous in *thinking* these measures absolutely *necessary*.

the thing to which they refer. That there may have been politics founded in compact, I make no question; but the history of the world will satisfy every reasonable person, that in many more cases, perhaps thirty to one, states have arisen from causes widely different. If those, however, who use the expression, mean no more when they say that magistrates have violated *the original compact*, and are therefore no longer entitled to the obedience of the subject, than I mean when I say, they so manifestly counteract *the great end of magistracy*, as renders resistance itself less a public evil than obedience, I shall admit the phrase, though I cannot help considering it as both an obscure and an improper way of expressing a plain sentiment. But if something further be meant, I should like, before I say any thing for, or against it, to have some evidence of the *existence* of such a compact, and likewise to know a little of its *contents*. As the matter stands, I consider it as one of those phrases which are very convenient for the professed disputant, because they are both indefinite and dark, and may be made to comprehend under them all the chimeras of his own imagination. Many such have been introduced into this controversy, which, as they only serve to perplex it, are very apt to mislead the unwary.

I return to my subject. Various circumstances in different countries have given rise to the establishment of various forms of government. Though these are far from being equal in point of excellency, *public good* requires, that, except in cases of extremity, each should be preserved from violence *. It may be objected that, on my principles, a bad constitution can never be amended or improved. I answer, To attempt the amendment by force, that is, by subverting the public peace, and throwing all into confusion, is to seek to attain a *distant good*, about the attainment of which we are *uncertain*, at the price of a *certain*

* 'But does not this sentiment,' say our adversaries, 'ascribe right to pos-'session however acquired? Might it not serve to legalize even the *American* '*Congress?*' Not at all. No possession that cannot be denominated *peaceable* and *established*, in other words, no possession from which the people, instead of deriving the blessings of order, internal peace and protection, reap nothing but the greatest of curses, confusion, civil war, and the total insecurity of every thing valuable, property, liberty, and life, can be legalized by a sentiment founded in regard to public tranquillity.

and *immediate evil*, in all probability greater than the good can compensate, if attained. In all states, especially in all civilized states, as was already hinted, there are constitutional methods of effecting useful alterations and improvements. Against the proper application of these, there can lie no objection. Those only are the innovators alluded to in my text, who by irregular, violent, and unconstitutional methods, by resistance and revolt, seek to subvert the established order.

Here a question may pertinently be put, 'May it not happen, 'that the innovations which give rise to national calamities have 'originated with the *rulers*? If they, by assuming an unusual 'power, overleap the bounds of the constitution, fixed by im-'memorial custom, by fundamental laws, or by positive conven-'tion, do they not come within the description of the persons 'given to change?' It is not to be denied that this may be the case, and sometimes has been. It is besides an undoubted truth, that the *rights and liberties of the people* are as real, and as valuable, and ought to be held as sacred, a part of the constitution, as *the powers and prerogatives of the magistrate*.

When Charles I. attempted to govern without a parliament, and to impose taxes on the people by his own authority alone, he, doubtless, and all those who advised and abetted such measures, were to be ranked with *them that are given to change*. Nay, however unusual the application may be, it was properly they who did not submit to what Paul denominates *the ordinance of God, the powers that be*. The king with us possesses the whole executive power, and constitutes an essential branch of the legislative; but as the executive, from the nature of the thing, is subordinate to the legislative, he, by assuming in his own person the authority of the whole legislature, usurped what did not belong to him, and thereby opposed God's ordinance. But though the usurpation may be justly said to have originated with the crown, it cannot be affirmed that it ended there. The House of Commons of the long parliament quickly showed the same propensity to usurpation and despotic power. They usurped the authority of the crown and of the peers, both which constituent members of the state they suppressed, taking the whole business of legislation on themselves. They usurped likewise the rights of the people. Delegated for a limited time only,

they maintained by the sword the possession they had once obtained, after the time in which they had any *legal* authority was expired; and were at last ignominiously expelled by a new usurper, a creature of their own; thus *receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

They eminently evinced the danger and the madness of destroying a good constitution, in the delusive hope of erecting, what some of them no doubt fancied, a better, in its stead. The wounds given by the stretches of prerogative had been healed, the public grievances redressed, sufficient security of the rights and privileges of all orders obtained, when the House of Commons, observing their ascendancy over the Crown and the House of Lords, and intoxicated with the power they had acquired, beyond their most sanguine expectation, and beyond the example of all former parliaments, not knowing where to stop, persisted in their violence, till they involved the nation in blood, murdered the king, and overset the constitution.

But descending from former times and from the general topic of the *rights of the magistrate, and the duty of the subject,* let us now inquire a little (which was the second thing I proposed to do) into *the merits of the contest* wherein we are at this time unhappily engaged with our revolted brethren in America. The examination of this question will lead to the discussion of some points, which, though affecting the general nature and foundations of government, could not have been so properly introduced under the former head. Can we then with justice charge the civil war that now rages in our colonies, on the tyranny or misgovernment of the ruling powers? Has any thing been done that could be said justly to provoke their revolt, to render resistance the necessary means of *self-preservation,* and so to exempt them, in using it, from the charge of rebellion? Or, on the other hand, Have artful and ambitious men, both on their side of the water and on ours, had the address, for their own private ends, to mislead a people whom wealth and luxury have corrupted, and rendered prone to licentiousness and faction? Have these *false friends* and *sham patriots* inflamed their minds with imaginary invasions of their rights, and with fears and jealousies for which there is no foundation? In such a situa-

tion, it is of great consequence to people to examine the matter impartially. This is the first step, and when properly executed, gives some ground to hope, that on whichever side the fault lies, it may in time be corrected.

The scene of action, it is true, lies far from us; but we are all deeply concerned in the consequences. Besides, in a government which has so great a mixture of democracy as the British, it is of importance that the measures of the administration be supported by the favour of the people, if right; and that they be checked by the general disapprobation, if wrong. The one tends to confirm, the other to correct, them. In this country, no ministry (and it is our happiness and glory that it is so) can long persist in a train of measures universally condemned. But if, amongst us, such is the influence of the popular suffrage, we ought all to be the more careful that we be well informed. The ferment excited in the colonies, and the clamour raised by a faction amongst ourselves, are, in one view, of the most alarming nature. The clamour is not levelled barely against the ministry, or even against the government, but against the whole legislature of the country. Its too manifest aim is to foment in the people a seditious and ungovernable spirit, destructive of all authority, than which nothing can be conceived of more ruinous tendency to the constitution. Nothing could vindicate this conduct but the most flagrant danger, of our religion, laws, and liberties. And I will venture to affirm, what will not be contradicted by the candid and judicious, that these great national concerns were never in less danger from the ruling powers, than in the present reign.

I am sensible that discussions of this sort are not easily adapted to the pulpit, nor can a *political* controversy, as it is called, (though in fact a controversy in which *morals* and *religion* are nearly concerned) be accounted level to the capacity of an ordinary audience. I shall not therefore enter into the numerous articles that have been made matter of dispute since this question began to be agitated. This is what neither propriety nor your time will permit me to do. But that our allegiance and loyalty may be not only more *rational*, but more *durable*, as proceeding from knowledge and principle, I shall consider a little that which may be called *the hinge* of the controversy, and

which gave rise to all the other and smaller points in question. Now this point is evidently the right claimed by the British Parliament, *to tax* our fellow-subjects in America.

And first, in matters of government and legislation, that which immemorial *custom* has established, unless opposed by some natural or divine law, is always regarded as obligatory. Now that taxes have been imposed by parliament, even from the first settlement of the colonies, has been put beyond a doubt by the writers on that side of the question *. First, they were taxed, and under the odious form of an excise too, by the *long parliament* in the time of the civil wars, by that very patriotic parliament which the American demagogues set up to themselves as a standard, every way worthy their imitation. After the restoration, they were in Charles II's. time taxed by parliament. Nor was this measure considered as unconstitutional after the revolution. On the contrary, the former act was, in the reign of William III. confirmed and explained by a new one. In Queen Anne's time, the act establishing the post-office, and the act for raising a duty from seamen for the support of Greenwich hospital, are made to bind the colonies as well as the island of Great Britain. There are acts to the same purpose in the reigns of George I. and of George II. To these acts the colonies then submitted; for they had not then discovered their natural and unalienable right to pay no taxes, but such as have been imposed with their own consent. The real ground of the difference is, Then they were poorer and more humble, now they are richer and more proud.

Nor do their *charters*, as has been falsely pretended, give any support to such exemption. In one of them the right of taxing by parliament is reserved in express terms, and in others it is reserved manifestly by implication, in as much as immunities from being taxed, are granted for a limited term of years, in some longer, in others shorter.

But it is ridiculous to pretend an exemption from being taxed, whilst they acknowledge, as they have always done till of late, the power of the British Parliament to make laws on other articles which shall bind the colonies. Yet some are inconsis-

* See The Rights of Great Britain asserted. Remarks on the 13th Parliament. Answer to the Declaration of the Congress, &c.

tent enough to maintain, that our legislature has power to do the one, but not the other. I should be glad to know on what the distinction is founded. Not on any positive convention; or on any act of the legislature asserting its right in the one case, and disclaiming it in the other. It is not pretended. Is then the distinction one of those which are founded in the nature of things? Impossible. What? Have we the command of their persons, their liberties, their lives, but not of their purses? May we declare what is criminal in them, what is not? and what crimes shall be punished with imprisonment, what with exile, what with stripes, and what with death, but cannot affect a single shilling of their coin? Is then the union between a man and his money more intimate than that between his soul and his body? One would be tempted to believe, that it had been in the head of some *miser*, whose *treasure* is his *god*, that this absurd conceit had first been gendered.

I own, I am exceedingly surprised at the inconsistency of those men, in other respects not deficient in understanding, who maintain the legality of the *navigation act*, confining the trade of the plantations, and yet deny the legality of *taxing* them. The former is, in my opinion, in several respects, more exceptionable than the latter; and, in some instances at least, a hardship on them, without being an advantage to us. But pray, consider, wherein lies the difference? We, by restraining part of their trade to ourselves, may oblige them, in some instances, to sell to us for sixpence the pound, what, if the market were open, they would get sevenpence for from others. Is not this precisely the same as to them, as if we should permit them to sell where they please, and exact in name of duty a penny on the pound-weight? It is even worse; for by confining the trade, the demand is lessened, and consequently a check is put on the industry that would be employed on that article.

But let it not be imagined, that all the restraints are laid on the colonists for *our* benefit, as has been most uncandidly pretended by some of the advocates on the other side. There are many restraints laid on us also by the legislature for *their* benefit. Perhaps it were better for both, that all such acts were revised. Taxes, if imposed with judgment, are generally less prejudicial than monopolies. But (whatever be in this) that the restric-

tions are reciprocal is manifest. In regard to some of their staple commodities, we are, for their benefit, prohibited, under severe penalties, to cultivate them in our own country; at the same time that we are not allowed to purchase them from any other nation, though we should get them both cheaper and better. Drawbacks and bounties are given to our merchants on exporting hence American commodities imported. This is an advantage to the Americans, as by raising the demand and price, it encourages their cultivation and labour, and an advantage to our traders in such articles, whom it enables to deal more extensively, and undersell others, but to the nation in general a detriment rather than a profit, inasmuch as the nation must always, by some impost or other, compensate to the government the value of the bounty.

Indeed the most consistent patrons of the American cause, deny that the legislative power of the British senate can justly extend to the colonies in any thing. If you ask them, Why? The answer is ready. 'Men cannot be bound by laws to which 'they have not given their *consent.*' This appears to them an *axiom* in politics as clear as any in mathematics. And though for a first principle, it has been wonderfully late of being discovered, they are so confident of its self-evidence, that they never attempt to prove it; they rather treat with contempt every person who is so weak as to question it. These gentlemen, however, will excuse me, as I am not certain that I understand them, and am a little nice about first principles, when I ask, what is the precise meaning they affix to the term *consent?* For I am much afraid, that if they had begun with borrowing from the mathematicians, the laudable practice of giving accurate *definitions* of their terms, and always adhering to those definitions, we had never heard of many of their newfangled *axioms.*

It is certain that, in the common acceptation, *consent* denotes a declared concurrence in opinion in regard to any measure, or a joint approbation of that measure. In this sense of the word, a law is made by the consent of those only who voted for it. It may happen then, in the House of Commons, when the house is thin, and a law passes by a small majority, that the *actual consenters* to the statute may be less than the *twentieth* part of the

representatives of the people *. But to this I am quickly answered, that 'There is comprehended under the term, not only 'an *actual* and *explicit*, but a *virtual* and *implicit* consent. Now 'the minority of the members present, with all the absent, are 'conceived as virtually and implicitly consenting to the deed of 'the majority of the members present.' Here then is an acceptation of the term obtruded upon us, ere we are aware, so very different from the former and ordinary acceptation, as to be in effect the reverse. Your *virtual and implicit consent* to a measure, may comprise, in some instances, what I should call an *actual and explicit dissent* from it, a disapprobation, or perhaps a declared abhorrence of it. Of this kind are many of the *virtual and implicit consents* given in both houses of parliament. The virtual consent of the electors, those against, as well as those for, each successful candidate, to all that shall be enacted in parliament, either with, or against, the approbation of their member, is liable, if possible, still more glaringly, to the same objections. Could a man be said to speak English, at least could he be said to speak truth, who should affirm that the city-members and the members for Middlesex *consented* to the act for shutting up the port of Boston, the act for restraining the trade of the colonies to Great Britain and Ireland, and the Quebec act? If he could affirm this with truth and propriety, one cannot help concluding that it is shameless in any of those gentlemen to raise so much clamour against acts to which they have given their *consent*. And if he could not affirm it, without exposing himself to be charged with telling an untruth, to what purpose is it to employ, in the very maxims on which ye found, terms in so vague and so illusive a manner, that, on some occasions, their meaning is in effect the contrary of that which ye give them on other occasions, and of that which they uniformly bear in common language? I know no purpose but one it can answer, a purpose it has often answered, a purpose it still but too well answers—to darken, to perplex, and to mislead.

* The House of Commons consists of 558 members. Of these, in all cases, except that of disputed elections, in which they act in a juridical not in a legislative capacity, 40 make a house, whereof 21 the majority is not the 20th part of the whole number.

When these people are pushed for an explanation, their *virtual* and *implied consent* dwindles to no more at last, than that by our constitution the minority are so far determined by the act of the majority, and those who have no voice in the election, as well as the electors, by the majority of the elected present at the passing of any act, as to be obliged to *submit* to it as the law of the land. This indeed is a language which I understand, but ye must observe, that, in this sense, it may with equal truth be affirmed, that, in the aristocratical state of Venice, the people are bound by no laws but those to which they have given their *consent*; because, by their constitution, the plebeians are determined by the deed of the patricians, and are therefore to be understood as *virtual* and *implicit* consenters. Nay, ye may extend the maxim to the inhabitants of Turkey, who, by the constitution of their country, may with equal propriety be considered as *consenting* to the declared will of the Grand Signior. The will of a majority from which I differ, is no more *my* will; their opinion which I disbelieve, is no more *my* opinion, than if they were the will and opinion of a single person only. In this respect number makes no odds. And I can never, without a perversion of speech, be said to be *self-governed*, if my conduct must be regulated by the will and opinion of others, and not by my own.

The source of all the blundering, so frequent on this subject, is the crude and contradictory conceit that government can be rendered compatible with perfect freedom. Nothing can be clearer than that the only man perfectly free, or self-directed, whose will is in every thing his law, is *the savage*, a being that is independent of every body. The very basis of political union is a partial sacrifice of liberty for *protection*. The savage, who first enters into this state, must be sensible that he impairs his freedom, to increase his security. He is willing to be, to a certain degree, dependent, and consequently less his own master, that thereby he may insure his life, his property, and even the exercise of his freedom, so far as it remains unaffected by the laws of the community. This holds, though in different degrees, whatever be the form of government adopted, be it of *one*, of *a few*, or of *the many*. In each it is equally essential, that the will of the individual be controlled, (and what

is this but the abridgement of his liberty?) in the first by the will of the *prince*, in the second by that of the *nobles*, in the third by that of the *people* *.

* There is a strange inaccuracy in the manner of talking some have used on this subject. 'The state,' say they, 'which is governed by its own will, that is, 'by the will of the majority of its members, is the only state than can be call-'ed *free*, being under self-government, and so its own legislator.' Be it so. But when, ere we are aware, ye slide in as identical, 'Every man in such a 'state is self-governed, and his own legislator;' ye obtrude upon us a proposition, which, so far from coinciding, is inconsistent with the former. The individual in such a community is, in every thing wherein the community interposes, governed not by his own will, but by theirs, by the will of the majority of his fellow-citizens, though diametrically opposite to that which his reason approves, and to which his disposition inclines him. 'But he has a vote in 'public measures, and if he be of the majority, there is a coincidence of his will 'with that of the state.' Undoubtedly. But then, if he be of the minority, is not his will in opposition to that of the state? Yet, in contradiction to his own, he must conform to the will of the state, consequently is not self-governed, consequently, by your own explanations, is no *freeman*, but the slave of the state. The state is *free*, but he is a *slave*. Occasional coincidences do not alter the case. The will of the despot may, in several instances, be coincident with that of his slave. The latter is not the less a slave in obeying him, though his yoke be the easier; for the concurrence is accidental. Ye insist that, 'By 'entering into such a polity, a man consents once for all to be governed by the 'will of the majority. The will of the majority therefore is properly thence-'forth considered as *his*. If so, he is still free, and his own legislator, even 'when acting in opposition to his judgment and choice.' Do ye not perceive, that this reply, if it have any weight, affects only the founders of the republics who enter personally into such engagements? But in fact it is a palpable sophism. A man is only so far free, as his actions are directed by what is his will, not by what *was* his will, by his *particular opinion* of the known case, not by a *general acquiescence* in he knew not what. By such an *acquiescence*, on the contrary, every body allows that he *binds* himself. Now as far as he is *bound*, he is no longer *free*. A poor man, in the time of famine, barters his liberty for bread, engaging his service for life to his rich neighbour. Such things have often happened. Now if one of our modern political philosophers, seeing this man afterwards groaning under the drudgery and intolerable hardships of his condition, should, to comfort him, tell him in the pompous language of his party, that he is as free as his master, that he is self-governed, self-directed, and his own legislator; because the will to which he consented to subject himself, ought from that moment to be considered as *his own*; who, I pray, would not accuse a comforter of this stamp, of insulting the wretch's misery with the most inhuman mockery.

Once more, in your paragon of republics, every *man* of whatever quality, character, station, or circumstances, has an equal share in governing; because to exclude any *man* from this honour, which ye deem his birth-right, and to

'Is there then no difference between one government and 'another, between what is thought the most despotic, and the 'freest?' There are many differences, but they result from principles totally distinct from those in which some modern political schemers affect to place them. One momentous difference is, when, by the constitution, the authority of *the laws* is paramount to that of any *persons*, however eminent in station. In this case the people are governed by established rules, which they know, or may know, if they will, and are not liable to be punished by their superiors, unless they transgress those rules. Such are properly under a *legal government*. When the reverse obtains, and men are liable to be harrassed at the pleasure of their superiors, though guilty of no transgression of a known rule, they are under *arbitrary power*. Again, the government is not only denominated *legal* but *free*, where, from its structure, there arises the highest probability that the laws shall be both equitable, and adapted to public utility. When positive statutes coincide with the natural sentiments of right and ideas of fitness, our minds so entirely approve them, that we do not consider them as *restraints*, additional to those to which our mental powers have subjected us. But when betwixt these, instead of coincidence, there is contrariety, the condition of the people is unnatural, and so far slavish as the laws prove a gall-

enslave him, ye affirm are the same. It has been asked, (but I have not yet heard of any answer) why not every *woman* and every *child?* How unworthily soever these are treated in our politics, we should not imagine that in your perfect model, where we are made to expect the very elixir of freedom, the greater part of the species would be left in absolute thraldom. Is it the doctrine of these patrons of the natural rights of humanity, that *woman* is, and ought to be, doomed the irredeemable captive and *drudge* of that *lordly* creature MAN? Is this her destiny even with the friends of freedom? There can be no doubt of it: For, if they will give her no suffrage in national councils, no voice in legislation, she is not governed by her own will, is not her own legislatrix, and therefore, by their fundamental axioms, has no liberty, but is the hopeless slave of those whose will she receives for law. I cannot help thinking this exclusion the more inexcusable, that their enlarged plan which admits all men without distinction of rank, education, or circumstances, could have sustained no conceivable injury, had they overlooked also the distinctions of age and sex. This would, without endangering their scheme in the least, have added to it more *liberality*, as well as *uniformity*. Indeed, to add to its absurdity and confusion, will be admitted by every cool and impartial inquirer, to be beyond the compass of possibility.

ing yoke, to which nothing but terror can secure obedience. In this respect the odds in form of government is very great.

In regard to our own, *That* one of the essential branches of the legislature is elective, *that* its members must be men of such rank and fortune as give them a personal interest in preserving the constitution and promoting the public good, *that* they are elected from all the different counties and boroughs in the island, by those who have a principal concern both in agriculture and in trade, *that* they are but temporary legislators, and may soon be changed; *that* the laws they make for others must affect themselves; *these* are the great bulwarks of BRITISH FREEDOM, as they afford the supreme council of the nation, the best opportunities of knowing, and the strongest motives for enacting, what is most beneficial, not to *one* part of the country, or to *one* class of the inhabitants, but to *the whole*. And if so, the people will very rarely be laid under *hurtful*, and not often under *unreasonable*, that is, unnecessary *restraints*. The more this is the case with a people, the more they enjoy of *civil liberty*, and the freer is their government.

Another important difference in political models, in respect of freedom, is, when the legislature is so constituted, as to secure alike against the tyranny of the *great*, and the madness of the *multitude*. The first of these is an invariable effect, in some degree, of absolute monarchy, and in the highest degree of unlimited aristocracy, where the power is lodged in an hereditary nobility. The second is as invariably the consequence of pure democracy. The populace in every nation are, and must be, from the laborious and circumscribed way of life, to which necessity subjects them for subsistence, ignorant and credulous, an easy prey to ambitious, worthless, and designing men. And fatal experience evinces, that none can be more unjust and cruel, or more blind and precipitate, than an incensed rabble; 'never is human nature so debased,' says a celebrated foreigner, 'as when ignorance is armed with power *.' The guard there is in the British Constitution, against both extremes, is justly accounted its principal excellence. The only other difference I shall mention, is the security there is under some civil establishments of *impartial judgment* to litigants, and

* Voltaire, Hist. Gen. Chap. 128.

a *fair trial* to those accused of crimes. Thereby the people are defended against encroachment and oppression both from neighbours and from rulers. These are the principal distinctions between *legal* and *arbitrary*, *free* and *slavish*, as applied to governments. These are in like manner real and weighty distinctions, very unlike the illusive dreams of our political castle-builders.

But if any where the idea of such a democracy, wherein every member is his own lawgiver, is realized, it is, as has been justly observed by some writers, in the diets and dietines of Poland; for in the established *anarchy* of that country, every member, that is, every nobleman, for the commons are no better than slaves, has it in his power to stop the proceedings of the whole. The *real*, not the *nominal*, consent of every individual is there literally necessary. The consequence is, that nowhere, under sophi, mogul, or sultan, is there less order, less liberty, less security than there. Every man is at the mercy of every man. Every man has it in his power to do much and public mischief, not one to do any public and substantial good. Is then this chaotic jumble, for I can call it neither government nor constitution, the great idol of our modern republicans? I cannot allow myself to think so. But I am certain of one thing, that it is the only model which their fantastic maxims serve in any degree to justify.

I do not say that that model, bad as it is, is an exact representation of the modern political monster *self-legislation*, that it equals the extravagance implied in the definition given of a free or legal government, the only government wherein the people are under an obligation in conscience to obey the magistrate. 'It is,' say they, 'a state wherein every man is governed by 'laws of his own making.' These are indeed fine words, and an admirable topic they furnish to popular declaimers. But if ye do not choose to be fascinated by unmeaning phrases, ye need only reflect, and the charm dissolves of itself. Who is so ignorant as to need to be told, that the system of laws in every civilized nation, the *freest*, if ye will, in the universe, is the work of ages, and that no persons living can, in any sense, be said to be makers of them? Our *consent* could not have been asked to the making of laws, before we had an existence; and it is

no otherwise that we give it to them now, than as we give it to the laws of the universe, in accommodating ourselves to them the best way we can. Nay, there are many of them which, though we submit to them, we may disapprove, and would alter, if we could. To say they are the work of our ancestors, is nothing to the purpose. We are as distinct persons from them, as from the people of France or of Egypt, and our inclinations and sentiments may be as different from theirs, as from those of any other nation whatever. And though it be true, that the present generation has some share in the business of law-making, as well as former generations, it is equally true, that, in a state considerably advanced in civilization, all the laws that can be made in the time of any one set of legislators, will scarcely be found to exceed the ten thousandth part of the whole code.

But if, by all the parade of big words, no more is meant than the *acquiescence*, which, from a principle both of public utility and of private, we give to the laws of our country, it might with equal truth be affirmed, that the laws of nature, whereby the heats in summer, and the storms in winter, and the temperate weather in spring and autumn, are conducted, are of *our making*, because we find it both our duty and our interest to acquiesce in them. Once more, if all those glorious privileges so pompously displayed, sink, on the scrutiny, into a mere passive submission and *acquiescence*, and if this be the true basis of civil liberty, the inhabitants of Persia or of Japan have more freedom than we Britons, as *their* acquiescence will be found much perfecter than *ours*. The less power the people have in matters of legislation and government, the more these matters will be considered by them as on a footing with the laws of the universe, and beyond their reach. On the contrary, the greater power they have, the more they will be accustomed to scrutinize public measures, and the more they will find themselves disposed to grumble.

I have already observed, that with those reasoners, whose sentiments on this subject I have been examining, no form of government, wherein their radical maxims have no place, can be called *just* or *legitimate*, or can lay a moral obligation on the people to obedience. 'Every other form,' say they, 'as it is

'founded in violence, of one kind or other, so, when a proper 'opportunity offers, may justly be overturned by violence, nay, 'ought to be overturned, that room may be made for a free and 'rightful government, the only one that binds the conscience.' I should think that the bare mention of consequences so baneful to society, logically deducible from a set of principles, would startle the benevolent and judicious, and make them coolly re-examine the principles which lead to such conclusions, by whatever respectable names they come recommended. I know that some such paradoxes, as I have been combating, have been adopted, or rather hastily thrown out in the heat of disputation, and party-conflicts unfriendly to the discovery of truth, by writers whose fame, in other respects deservedly great, has drawn a veneration even for their *crudities*. But let us not be so much dazzled by any name, how illustrious soever, as to sacrifice to it the rights of truth and justice.

Consider, I pray you, is it credible, that in at least nineteen nations out of twenty now existing in the world (I admit, for argument's sake, that there are some which come within their description) the people are under no obligation to obey the ruling powers? Is there no right but that of the stronger subsisting among them? How does this doctrine quadrate with that of the New Testament? I hope I speak to the disciples of Christ, to those who believe the Scriptures to be a revelation from God. If so, I persuade myself, my hearers will not be rash in admitting any theory which will not bear the test of Holy Writ. We have already tried those novel maxims of our modern republicans by the light of REASON; let us bring them also to the Christian touchstone, the BIBLE. This is a field on which, as far as I have observed, the combatants have not yet entered. But surely, if we have not renounced the faith of Jesus, it is of the utmost consequence to us to know, how far any principles, however artfully inculcated, are conformable to the heavenly lessons transmitted from our divine Master. Hear his faithful servant Paul, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they*

that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation *. Can any thing be more explicit? By the most moderate interpretation this threatening must denote divine punishment either here or hereafter. No limitation is annexed, from which we can learn that the precept was meant to extend to the subjects of only one species of civil polity. Magistrates, on the contrary, are here denoted by terms of the most extensive signification, that we may know that the intention was to comprehend those under every constitution. They are *the higher*, or the ruling *powers*, and *the powers that be*, those under the conduct of providence settled among you, democratical or monarchical, hereditary or elective. And if we inquire, What were the powers actually in being at the time, to which the people were commanded to be subject? The answer is plain. They were the powers of the Roman government, not of the commonwealth, but of the empire, a new species of military monarchy, elective indeed, but not by the people, either collectively or representatively, irregular, arbitrary, and such as suited not in any respect what modern theorists call *a just and legitimate government.*

In regard to tribute, the point so hotly agitated with us at present, nothing can be more express. *Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour* †. What shall we say to this passage, if all custom and tribute are naturally and essentially, *free gifts* on the part of the people, and if consequently no tribute or custom could be due to any man to whom they had not previously, either personally, or by their representatives, freely given and granted it? But with this doctrine, it seems, the apostle was utterly unacquainted.

The Jews indeed had a system of their own with regard to taxing, quite different from the American system, (of which they certainly had no conception) but plainly pointing to the same object, an *exemption.* Their doctrine was, that 'God's 'elect people, the holy nation, the descendants of the patriarchs, 'were not taxable by idolaters such as the Romans, uncircumcis-'ed and profane.' This was the grand topic of declamation of *their* patriots; for *they* too had their patriots. Their objection, as it had some colour from the Old Testament, could not fail

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2. † Rom. xiii. 7.

to appear plausible to a people with whose prejudices, pride and selfishness it perfectly coincided. But did our Saviour, when consulted by them, give his sanction to their sentiments? Did he by his answer court popularity, and the fame of *patriotism?* I use the term in its modern degradation. Quite the reverse. Though, by his manner of answering, he eluded the malice his enemies showed in putting the question, nothing can be more decisive than his reply. After asking them to show him the tribute money, and being told that it bore Cesar's image and superscription, he immediately rejoined, *Render therefore to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and to God the things which are God's* *, plainly intimating, that as they derived the advantages of protection and civil order from the Roman government, of which the currency of its coin was an evidence, they ought not to refuse contributing to its support. Yet it is certain, that to any tax exacted by the Romans, the consent of no Jew was ever asked. Is it so then, that this original, this unalienable, this indefeasible right, to which, in the turgid dialect of America, *the laws of nature and of nature's God* entitle every man, that no part of his property can be alienated without his consent, was totally unknown to our Lord and his apostles †?

* Matth. xxii. 24.

† It is indeed scarcely credible that any who entail slavery on their fellow-creatures, whom they buy and sell like cattle in the market (and some such, it is said, are in the *congress*) should have the absurd effrontery to adopt this language. If they really believe their own doctrine, what opinion must they entertain of themselves, who can haughtily trample on what they acknowledge to be the unalienable rights of mankind? Will they dare to elude this charge, by declaring that they do not consider *negroes* and *Indians* as of the human species? That they account them beasts, or rather worse, one would naturally infer from the treatment they too commonly give them. But I have not yet heard, that they openly profess this opinion. How well does their conduct verify what has been remarked with great justice of all those republican levellers, who raise a clamour about *the natural equality of men*, and *their indefeasible rights*; that they mean only to level all distinctions above them, and pull down their superiors, at the same time that they tyrannize over their inferiors, and widen, as much as possible, the distance between themselves and those below them. Indeed this character, if I understand him right, is given to the southern provinces, particularly Virginia and the Carolinas by their celebrated patron, Mr. Burke. [See his speech, March 1775.] Nay, *the haughtiness of domination*, as he expresses it, exercised over the wretches, in their power, is by the MAGIC of his eloquence, converted into an argument with their superiors, the British legisla-

Did *they* not discover what is clear as demonstration to all our *western brethren*, that without such consent, by whatever law or statute the tax was imposed, it could be no better than *statutable plunder* * ? Or knowing it, did they dissemble the matter, take the aid of equivocation, that they might conceal it from the people, and court the favour of the great? Will any Christian affirm this; and not rather, that, if they had known of such a right, they would have furnished their countrymen with this additional argument in support of their plea; instructing them better in the prerogatives of the species, which were not the less theirs, because they were so stupid as not to find them out?

Further, did the first publishers of the gospel never reflect that Judea was one country and Italy another, that the Jews and the Romans were two very distant peoples, different in origin, manners, laws, and language, and of religions opposite in every article and incompatible? The argument would have been incomparably stronger in their case than it is in our present contest, which admits only the plea of distance.

Has Paul in particular acted the politician in this affair? Has he shrewdly given an ambigious order to pay tribute to whom tribute is due, that, on the one hand, he might appear a dutiful subject to the Pagan magistrate, and, on the other, might suggest to Christians an excellent pretence for eluding the obligation, by maintaining that there is none to whom tribute is due? Far be such vile artifices, the disgrace even of Jesuits, from the select missionaries of THE TRUE AND FAITHFUL WITNESS. Far be such execrable casuistry from being charged on the *word* of GOD, the ORACLE of *truth*. Indeed if the whole passage is attended to, we shall find that the apostle has left no scope for this poor subterfuge. *For this cause*, says he, *pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers attending continually on this very thing*. He does not he-

ture, to treat these petty tyrants with greater lenity than would be proper towards persons more humble and humane. An ordinary genius would have deduced the opposite conclusion; for if any people deserve to *have judgment without mercy*, it is they *who show no mercy*. I do not say, that this ought to be our rule of dealing with them. 'Let mercy, though unmerited, still triumph over judgment.'

* A favourite phrase of the Congress.

nitate to ascribe to them a divine commission, in the character even of *taxers*. Now nothing is more certain than that in the Roman empire in those days, the people, throughout the provinces, were assessed either by the imperial authority, or by the senate; and had no share, either personally, or by representatives, in assessing themselves. For the senate was not chosen by the people. I intreat you, my brethren, for the sake of *truth*, for the sake of *that worthy name by which ye are called*, for the sake of *your own souls*, and those of *your fellow-Christians*, to compare impartially the language of our Lord and his apostles with that of our modern demagogues: and from the difference ye find in them, judge of the different spirit which they breathe. Not a single hint do we get from those, that 'taxation 'and representation are inseparable;' no suggestion that for 'Christians tamely to submit in an article of this nature would 'be to sacrifice their liberties, to be lost to every sense of vir-'tue, to sell themselves and their posterity to perpetual servi-'tude.' Let those do it who can; I own it is impossible for me to reconcile this language with that of the gospel *.

* Nothing has astonished me more in the course of this controversy, than to observe that some learned men on the opposite side should imagine, that they can conciliate their favourite maxims with the precepts of the gospel. One in particular, of whose abilities and piety I have a very great opinion, and to whose sentiments I have in this discourse frequently alluded, has (I am convinced very sincerely) bestowed the highest encomiums on Christianity as the perfection of religion and of reason. But truth compels me to remark, that, if the principles of his party be well founded, those encomiums are exceedingly misplaced; their system not having a greater enemy on earth than the gospel. Once admit their notions of the *only just and legitimate government*; and ye transform the publishers of our religion into preachers of slavery, both internal and external. To inculcate on the Romans obedience to rulers on whom they had no check, and submission to edicts in the framing of which they had no share, directly or indirectly; what was it, on the system of our American advocates, if it was not preaching up *internal slavery* which subjects the community to the will of a part? And in regard to other nations, as Jews and Greeks, to command them to obey the emperor, and magistrates deputed by him; what was it, less than preaching up *external slavery* which subjects nations to a distant and foreign power? As to this sort, we are not left to infer it. We are told plainly, 'Such 'was the slavery of the provinces subject to ancient Rome.' How unreasonable and injurious then was it to be an advocate for such a power, to attempt to reconcile men to it, by maintaining that resistance will expose them to divine vengeance? Yet on the principles of our adversaries, thus unreasonable and thus

So strong did the argument from the words of Paul appear against the papal usurpations on the secular powers; for if every soul must be subject to them, (and it was to the Romans the words were addressed) the bishop or pope can plead no exemption, (so strong, I say, did this argument appear) that some of the canonists could conceive no way of eluding it, but by maintaining that all such injunctions are merely *prudential advices*; that as the Christians were then the weaker party, who, if they

injurious (there is no dissembling it) were Jesus Christ and his apostles Peter and Paul. Jesus Christ to his countrymen in Judea, Peter to the Jews in dispersion, and Paul to the Cretans, on whom he strictly enjoined Titus to inculcate those enslaving doctrines. And if to make no difference in enforcing obedience on those *within*, and those *without*, that community which might be strictly denominated ROMAN; if, without suggesting any distinction, to employ the same sanctions, the divine favour and the divine displeasure, with them both, be to maintain that resistance is *no less criminal* in the one case than in the other: and if to maintain this be, as has been affirmed, to *insult* those to whom this language is addressed, I do not see in what manner our antagonists will clear our Lord and his apostles from this ugly imputation——'But has 'nothing been alleged from scripture on the other side?' It is true, that a few passages which, as appears from the expressions employed, and from the context, relate solely to the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, and the means whereby it ought to be promoted and supported, have most unnaturally been forced into the service of political projectors. Yet nothing can be clearer, than that the intention of those places, so far from being to prescribe a model to worldly polities, was to contradistinguish the *church*, a heavenly polity, to all of them. They do not therefore invalidate the methods proper to be used in these; but expressly prohibit the Christian pastors from admitting those methods into the service of religion. However much therefore those instructions may militate against the erection of a spiritual tyranny, or *Hierarchy*, like the Romish, they nowise affect the secular power. This, with its various arrangements and offices, though of a different nature, operating by different means, and to a different end, so far from being superseded by the other, is declared also to be *the ordinance of God*, and necessary to human society in its present corrupt state. It happens unluckily for our opponents, that as monarchy was the established power in the time of our Lord and his apostles, when these, in their injunctions, descend to particulars, they always specify the subordinations of kingly government. In short, the argument from scripture, in every view I take of it, appears so full, so explicit, so decisive, that I could undertake to demonstrate that the dissolute and execrable lessons of a late father to his son, on the subject of *adultery* and *dissimulation*, are not more irreconcileable to the pure morals of Christianity, than the libertine and hardly less pernicious maxims, though susceptible of a more specious colouring, of some democratical declaimers.

had not paid willingly, would have been compelled, and might have suffered in other respects, the apostle thought it advisable for them to comply, since they could not make their condition better by a refusal. Those precepts then are to be viewed in the same light as we should view the counsel of a friend, who, when we were setting out on a journey, should warn us, that if we meet with highwaymen on the road, we ought to give them our money rather than endanger our lives. A curious turn, I must acknowledge, to the dictates of inspiration.

At the same time I do but justice to those casuists when I confess, that I have not heard any thing so specious, for obviating so strong an argument from Scripture, advanced by any of our champions on the side of the American revolt. For this reason, I shall suppose that such of them as think the doctrine of the Bible of any consequence in the debate, satisfy their consciences with the gloss above mentioned. Be it then, that there is no right in any government not established and upheld by universal consent, but the free-booter's right, the right of the stronger: that there is no law in such but club-law; that there is no motive to submission, but that which ought to influence us, in case we were encountered by pirates, robbers, or ruffians of whatever denomination; that there is no difference between these and civil rulers, but such as obtains between less and greater villains, not a difference in kind, but in degree. On this hypothesis, if the apostle had been advising Christians, as to the conduct they should maintain in case of being attacked by robbers, his style and reasoning ought to have been the same. But will any Christian, will even a candid infidel, who has read the apostle's writings, affirm that he would have used the same arguments? Would his reason for their compliance have been, 'that robbery is of *God?* that the highwayman is his *minister* 'for their good, expressly *commissioned* to rob on the highway; 'that resisting him is resisting *God's ordinance*, and the sure way 'of incurring the divine vengeance?' or, Could this have been called arguing on the merely prudential consideration of not idly opposing a superior force? Barely to unfold what is implied in some opinions is a sufficient refutation. But what can more explicitly exclude this absurd, not to say blasphemous cavil, than what follows, *Be ye subject also not only for wrath, but for*

conscience sake; not only from fear of wrath, the punishment that may be inflicted by the offended magistrate, but (even if that could be eluded) act thus from a principle of duty towards God, who requires it of you.

A celebrated foreigner, a republican too of the new model, whose understanding, though very acute, has, in several instances, proved the dupe of a warm imagination and strong passions, intoxicated with the chimerical maxims I have already considered, has, with infinite labour, chalked out the plan of a democracy perfectly Utopian, such as never was, and never will be, brought into effect. This man, though a professed admirer of the gospel, and at times, he would make us think, a believer, had too much discernment not to discover, and too much candour not to acknowledge, that it is impossible to reconcile Christianity with the idol of a republic which he had reared up. I am surprised that none of the *worshippers* of this *IDOL*, in our island, seems to have attended to this remark *. As little have they attended to another of the same author, that it is only in a very small city that his scheme is practicable †. I am not so much astonished that they have not discovered, what to me is equally plain, that *common sense* (with which I could never find the gospel at variance in any thing) is not less its foe than Christianity.

That our religion strongly inculcates the duty of subjects to the magistrate (which this philosopher calls being favourable to tyranny) is undeniable. It gives no preference to one form of government above another; it does not enter into the question, but it is friendly to order and to the public peace, which it will not permit us rashly to infringe; it teaches us to respect the dispensations of providence, and to seek the good of the society whereof we are members. The ancient landmarks of the constitution it forbids us to remove, in the presumptuous hope that we shall place them anew better than our fathers have done. Nay more, it unites in such a manner our allegiance to the sovereign, and loyalty to the constitution of our country, with piety towards God, as shows that there is an intimate connection between these duties. *Fear the Lord and the king*, says Solomon, *and*

* Rousseau Du contrat social, Liv. iv. chap. viii.

† Liv. iii. chap. xv.

meddle not with them that are given to change. To the same purpose Peter, *Fear God, honour the king* *. And in the words I have often referred to from Paul, the duty is all along enforced from a principle of reverence to God. At the same time it does not preclude the constitutional support of any civil right. Paul, though as sensible as any man of the shortness of life, and of the smallness of its value, compared with eternity, did not disdain oftener than once to assert his right as a denizen of Rome, happily joining the spirit of the Roman with the moderation of the Christian †. And, in the former part of this discourse, I have shown, I hope, with sufficient evidence, that none of the expressions, recommending the duty of allegiance, if candidly interpreted by the same rules which are admitted in interpreting other precepts similarly expressed, can be understood to exclude an exception in cases of extreme necessity. It was also observed, that in the general terms employed in Scripture, there is manifestly included the *whole* of the civil constitution. And the whole is more to be regarded than a *part.* Even the royal power, however considerable, is still, in respect of the constitution, but a part.

In regard to the present quarrel, it may justly be said that it is the *whole* that is attacked. Indeed the ringleaders of the American revolt, the members of their congress, have, in their last declaration, pointed all their malice against the King, as though, in consequence of a settled plan, he had been adopting and pursuing tyrannical measures in order to render himself absolute. They have accordingly spared no abuse, no insult, by which they could inflame the minds of an unhappy and deluded people. Their expressions are such as decency forbids me to repeat. The *means* they employ are indeed of a colour with the *end* they pursue. But let those who lay claim to any impartiality or candour, but reflect, and say, in what single instance our benign *sovereign* has adopted any measure, but by the advice of the British *legislature*, or pursued a separate interest from that of the British *nation.* It is solely concerning the supremacy of the *Parliament*, the legislative body of Great Britain, and not concerning the prerogatives of the *crown*, that we are now contending. And ought not this circumstance to

* 1 Pet. ii. 17. † Acts xvi. 37.; xxii. 25.

enhance our obligation to concur with alacrity, as far as our influence will extend, in strengthening the hands of the government, now laid under a necessity of seeking by arms, to bring back to their duty, those insolent and rebellious subjects?

I am unwilling to quit the argument, without taking notice of every plea that may seem to be of weight on the other side of the question. Some of the more moderate advocates for these people will plead, that, without recurring to any democratical and newfangled principles, or to the footing on which the colonists themselves, and some of their most sanguine champions in this country, think proper to place their defence, these few questions, for clearing the point, may pertinently be asked. First, 'Whether or not have the British Americans a civil and constitutional right (let the terms *natural* and *unalienable*, with the other *nonsense* employed for taking in the rabble, be exploded) to all the privileges of British subjects?' Secondly, 'Is it not a distinguishing privilege of British subjects, that they are not taxable but by their representatives?' And, thirdly, 'If this be the case, can the Americans be regularly or justly taxed by a parliament in which they have no representatives?'

In answer to the first question, It is admitted they are entitled to all the privileges of British subjects. In answer to the second, If the members of the House of Commons are, as the objector surely means to signify, the representatives only of those by whom they are elected, it is not the privilege of all British subjects, that they are not taxable but by their representatives. This is the privilege of those only who are in a certain way qualified. It is not above one in twenty of the people of England, or above one in a hundred of the people of Scotland, who have a voice in the election of members of parliament. But if the members represent also those who are not their electors, and have no power, no influence whatever, in electing them, it will be impossible to assign a good reason why they may not be denominated the representatives of all the subjects in America, as well as in Britain. This leads directly to the answer to the third question. If, as has been computed, there be at least between six and seven millions of people in Great Britain, who are taxed by a parliament in which they are not represented, it can be deemed neither unreasonable nor unconstitutional, that

there should be about two millions in America in the same situation.

It would be uncandid not to admit that there is some difference in the cases. The members of the House of Commons, in almost every tax (for there are some exceptions *) they lay on their British fellow-subjects, tax themselves in proportion. The case is different in regard to their fellow-subjects in America. But this is an inequality that necessarily results from the difference of situation; and is, besides, more than counterbalanced by some motives and difficulties that will ever effectually prevent the legislature from going the same lengths in taxing the American subjects which it may safely go in taxing Britons.

But it is notorious, that the former have declared against every method that has yet been devised for removing this capital objection, the only one of consequence in the cause. The simplest method would doubtless be, to allow them a certain number of representatives in the House of Commons. Against this proposal they have always loudly and vehemently exclaimed. Do they favour what has also been suggested in this controversy, that a particular and moderate rate should be fixed, according to which the subsidies levied from them should uniformly bear a certain proportion to those levied from Great Britain? To this they have given no better reception than to the other. Yet this would effectually remove the grand difficulty, that the parliament, by loading the Americans, would ease themselves. In this case, on the contrary, no burden could be brought on them, but when a proportionably greater is laid on the British subject. Have they then proposed any method themselves for removing this obstacle, this great stumbling-block? Nothing that I know of, but a total *immunity*, or what is equivalent, to be left to do as they please. This and only this will content them.

Will any considerate person say, that this is a reasonable motion on their part? Nothing can be less so. The colonies

* The following, and perhaps some more, may be regarded as exceptions: The act establishing the post-office; from this tax the privilege of franking exempts all members of parliament. The act imposing a tax on seamen for the support of Greenwich hospital. The act for laying an excise on ale and beer brewed for sale.

indeed, by their own provincial assemblies, have been in the practice of raising a small part, and but a small part, of what is necessary for the internal administration of justice and the government of the colony. But in this way they have not hitherto raised money for defraying the more public and unavoidable expences of the government in the protection of the whole. Nor indeed is this an adequate method of doing it, considering the independency of the provinces on one another, considering the difficulty of adjustment, when every one of so many is left entirely to itself, considering too the natural selfishness of men, which leads them to shift the burden, as much as possible, off themselves, and throw it upon their neighbours. In the two last wars, which were entered into solely for the defence of the colonies, and in consequence of the clamour raised by them and their agents in this country, this nation was involved in more than seventy millions of debt. And of this enormous sum they have not agreed, nor will agree, to any rule, by which a certain contingent, however low, may be ascertained as what ought to be levied from them.

Shall I give you the sum of all their proposals to their British fellow-subjects, before they formally renounced their allegiance? I shall doubtless be accused of treating with ridicule a very serious business. But let it be observed, that when people are absurd in their propositions and demands, the naked truth makes their conduct ridiculous.—That it does so, can reflect only on themselves; since to expose their absurdity is the inevitable consequence of a just representation. I am not sensible that, in the following account, the real purport of their overtures and pretensions are, in any respect, misrepresented, or even heightened. What they claim, and what they offer, appear to amount to no more than this. 'We will do your 'king the honour to acknowledge him for our king; we will 'never refuse to pay him that *compliment*, provided no more 'than compliment is understood by it. Judicial proceedings 'shall be in his name, and *his name* (which will serve as well as 'any other name) shall stand at the head of our proclamations. 'Nay, he shall nominate to certain offices among us, provided 'it be in our power to feed or starve the officers, or at least to 'permit them to act, or tie up their hands, as we happen to like

'or dislike their conduct. Though we are not satisfied with 'the reasonableness of the thing, we shall, for the present, sub- 'mit to the restraints laid on our trade by the act of navigation, 'provided we have none of your military to guard the execu- 'tion of that act; and provided further, that when any of our 'merchants are accused of smuggling, their cause be tried 'by a jury of *smugglers*; or if any of our people be charged 'with sedition and riot, they be tried by a jury of the *mob*; 'for this, we think, is in the true spirit of trial by jury, which 'is, that a man be tried by his *peers*. We do not mean, how- 'ever, that this privilege shall extend in the same manner to 'your *custom-house officers*, and other dependants of the crown, 'who, if they should be sent hither, and be accused of any 'crime, shall be tried by a jury too, not indeed of custom-house 'officers, but of our *liberty-men*, that is, our rioters and contra- 'band traders, with their patrons and abettors.' And who can doubt that they are fit depositaries of the lives and properties of revenue-officers and soldiers? 'We will not be so disrespect- 'ful (however little we value it) as to decline participating in all 'the privileges of *British* subjects, inheritance, succession, 'offices, honours and dignities amongst you, equally with the '*natives* of Great Britain. Further, we will allow your nation 'the honour not only of being at the principal charge in sup- 'porting the internal government of our provinces, but also of 'protecting us, at your own expence, defensively and offensive- 'ly against all our enemies, real or imaginary, by sea and land, 'whenever we shall think proper to raise a clamour; and we 'will in return agree to give you'—How much?—'Just *what- 'ever we please*, and, if we please, *nothing at all*.' A most extraordinary covenant, wherein all the obligations are on one side, and every thing is discretionary on the other.

Is this the manner in which individuals, or even private companies, contract with one another! Yet there are no doubt many individuals, and perhaps some private companies, in whom it might be safe to repose so implicit a confidence. But to recommend to the people of one nation to take this method in treating with those of another, can scarcely be viewed otherwise than as an insult to their understandings. I may add, that of all nations the last in whom we could with safety place so

great a trust is the North Americans, if the unamiable portrait, which I am strongly inclined to think exaggerated, but which one of their warmest friends and ablest advocates has drawn of them, is a just representation of the original, and if they are such a *proud, fierce, jealous, restive, untractable, suspicious, litigious, chicaning race of petti-foggers*, as he seems to exhibit them *; and I may add, if they are grossly insincere and false, as the conduct of their worthy representatives, the *congress*, exhibits them to every one who will take the trouble to compare what they say of the article of religion in the Quebec act, in their Application to the people of Great Britain, with what they say of the same article, in their Address to the people of Canada. Their duplicity in this particular, and in some others, has proved matter of confusion to such of their partisans in this country, as have a regard to truth and candour †. Certain it is,

* Mr. Burke's Speech, March 22d, 1775.

† In their application to the people of this island, they say, 'We think the 'legislature of Great Britain is not authorised by the constitution to establish 'a religion fraught with sanguinary and impious tenets.' Again, 'Nor can 'we suppress our astonishment, that a British parliament should ever consent 'to establish in that country [Canada] a religion that has deluged your island 'in blood, and dispersed *impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder*, and *rebellion*, 'through every part of the world.' REBELLION too in this black catalogue. O the sanctimonious assurance of some men!

Quis tulerit GRACCHOS de *seditione* querentes?

In their Address to the inhabitants of the province of Quebec, after enumerating the rights which they affirm the Canadians ought to possess, they add, 'And what is offered to you by the late act of parliament in their place? 'Liberty of conscience in your religion: No: God gave it to you; and the 'temporal powers with which you have been, and are connected, firmly sti-'pulated for your enjoyment of it. If laws divine and human could secure it 'against the despotic rapacity of wicked men, it was secured before;' that is, when the city and province were surrendered, on capitulation, to his Britannic Majesty. Thus what, in the former Address, we are told *the legislature of Great Britain is not authorised by the constitution to do*, we learn from the latter, is no more than confirming a right to which the laws of God and the faith of contracts entitled that people; and which therefore it would have been both impious and treacherous in this nation to infringe. Nay, what is, if possible, more surprising, we learn hence that the British Parliament, instead of doing too much for the establishment of the Romish religion in that region, has done too little. The congress is kind enough, therefore, to give them notice of this, and to warn them that by the *act*, all their rights, civil and religious

however, that their terms of reconciliation, if they can be called *terms*, where all the concessions are exacted from one side, and nothing engaged for on the other, are, on every principle of common sense, utterly unworthy of regard. Better far to let them have their beloved independence. I am not sure that this would not have been the best measure from the beginning *. I

'are subject to arbitrary alterations by the governor and council; and power 'is expressly reserved, of appointing such courts of criminal, civil, and eccle- 'siastical jurisdiction as shall be thought proper.' They add, 'Such is the 'precarious tenure of *mere will* by which you hold your lives and RELIGION.' What a fine topic for declamation in abusing the British legislature these orators would have had, if the Roman Catholic religion had not been established in Canada! With what avidity would these zealous Protestants have laid hold on this circumstance, with what triumph would they have expatiated on it, in order to inflame the minds of the Popish Canadians! As to that religion itself, which they had represented in their Application to the people of Britain as the most frightful monster, it appears in their Address to the inhabitants of the province of Quebec, the most harmless thing in nature. 'We are too 'well acquainted,' mark the meanness of these flatterers, 'with the liberality 'of sentiment distinguishing your nation, to imagine that difference of reli- 'gion will prejudice you against a hearty amity with us. You know that 'the transcendent nature of freedom elevates those who unite in the cause, 'above all such low-minded infirmities. The Swiss cantons furnish a memor- 'able proof of this truth. Their union is composed of Catholic and Protestant 'states, living in the utmost concord and peace with one another; and thereby 'enabled, ever since they bravely vindicated their freedom, to defy and defeat 'every tyrant that has invaded them.' Really, Gentlemen, this is too much. For though such profound politicians, engaged in such immense undertakings may find it quite necessary to dispense with the rigid rules of *common honesty*, it would be proper to do it more *covertly*. Some semblance of that antiquated and cumbersome virtue, has always hitherto been judged convenient, even for the greatest Machiavels in politics. Your *barefaced* manner may create a suspicion of a defect of another sort, a defect of *common sense*. And it is to be feared that this imputation will do you more hurt than the other.

It would not however, be equitable to form a judgment of the *people* from the conduct of these *trustees*. When we consider the turbulence of the times wherein the members of the Congress were elected, the factious spirit that had diffused itself, and the seditious projects that were hatching, we have reason to believe, that few men of candour and moderation, of equity and good sense would stand forth candidates for the office. And if, by any chance, there were some such among them, there is little ground to think, that, during the general ferment, they would be honoured with the popular suffrage. The wisest and the best, we may justly conclude, have withdrawn from their elections altogether. And what the natural consequence would be is very evident.

* Dr. Tucker has advanced some very plausible arguments in support of this measure. See his Tracts.

say this, however, with all due submission and deference, for I am far from considering myself as a proper judge in so nice a question.

WHAT then is the conclusion of the whole? It is precisely that we follow the admonition of the wise man, with which we began, that we *fear the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.* Whilst we sincerely repent of the misimprovement of former mercies, which have provoked Heaven against us, let us act *as free, yet not using* our *liberty for a cloke of maliciousness*, a practice too common in these days, *but as the servants of God*; entertaining a proper detestation of that modern political hypocrisy, which, under the disguise of *patriotism* (a name once respectable, now brought into disgrace by frequent misapplication) attempts to screen the worst designs and most pernicious practices. Let us often reflect that it is no new thing to find men who *promise liberty* to others, *while they themselves are the servants of corruption* *. Such there were in the days of the apostles. Of such, Peter in particular warns Christians to beware. The description he gives of them bears too striking a resemblance, in many principal features, to the factious and disaffected of our own time, not to deserve our most serious attention. Like some of our American orators and popular tribunes, they delighted in a boastful, tumid, and bombastic diction. They spoke GREAT SWELLING *words of vanity* †. They *despised government*, were *presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities* ‡.

In regard to the body of the people, our deluded fellow-subjects on the other side of the Atlantic, let us consider them as objects of our pity more than of our indignation. In behalf of the mere populace, the unthinking multitude, it may with truth be pleaded almost in every insurrection, that their ignorance is their apology. *They know not what to do.* They are but the tools of a few aspiring, interested, and designing men, both on their side of the water, and on ours. Already, alas! they have severely felt the effects of their folly. Let us ardently pray to the Father of lights and of mercy, that he would open the *eyes*

* 2 Pet. ii. 19. † 2 Pet. ii. 18. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 10.

of the people, and turn the *hearts* of their leaders. Too long already have they been wandering in the dark, not knowing whither. Pretending to pursue liberty, they have turned their back upon it, they have fled from it. Seeking to avoid slavery, they have plunged headlong into it! May God who *ruleth the raging of the sea*, and *stilleth the noise of the waves, still the tumults of the people!* May he soon restore them to their senses, for their sakes and ours!

It is neither our duty nor our interest to wish them, or any part of the British dominions, in a state of servitude, but we ought to wish and pray, that all our present differences may be composed in such a manner, as, by providing against the like disturbances in time to come, may effectually secure a lasting peace. This is not more for *our* benefit than it is for *theirs*. And indeed the interest of both, if rightly understood, will be found to be the same. The radical evil in their governments seems to have been, even in the judgment of some of their friends *, that the constitutent members of their states were not equally balanced; the republican part was more than a counterpoise to both the rest. This, to superficial thinkers (who conceive democracy and freedom as synonymous) is regarded as so much gained to the side of liberty. There is not a more egregious error. The effect is indeed constantly an increase of licentiousness; than which no kind of tyranny is a greater enemy to rational and civil liberty. If recourse is had to matter of fact, I am persuaded those colonial governments will be found to have been the most turbulent, the most unhappy, the most licentious, I will add, the most intolerant, and such as by consequence gave the least security to the liberty and property of individuals, wherein the excess of power on the democratical side has been the greatest. May God, who bringeth light out of darkness, and order out of confusion, make all our troubles terminate in what shall prove the felicity of all!

* See Mr. Burke's Speech, March 1775.

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CONTAINING A SUMMARY OF ALL THE PARTICULARS ABOVE TREATED.

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AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND,

UPON THE

ALARMS THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED

IN REGARD TO

POPERY,

1779.

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.—JOHN VII. 24.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author would not have been so late in giving his judgment to the public, on the alarm that has been raised about the danger of the Protestant religion, if the duties of his office had permitted him to do it sooner. He cannot, however, consider it as being yet too late. The national assembly of this church has not yet interposed. It is not to be doubted that an application from them will be urged at their ensuing meeting. The Author is the more solicitous to give his sentiments in this manner, as it will not be in his power to be present. And though he spoke his mind freely on the question in the last Assembly, matters have proceeded so far since that time, that he could not excuse himself, if he omitted to give this additional and more ample testimony to the world of his judgment on the whole of this important subject?

HE hopes that what he here offers, will be attended to with coolness, and weighed with impartiality. He is influenced by no motive, but the love of truth and religion, and a desire of promoting the honour of this church, and the peace of this country. Intelligent readers will not accuse him of being too favourable to Popery. Such, he is afraid, if they suspect him of partiality, will be inclined to think that it is all on the other side. Thus much he will acknowledge, that his abhorrence of the spirit of that

illiberal superstition, heightens the dislike he has to what bears so striking a resemblance to it in the spirit now raised in this country.

He has been induced the more readily to take this method of delivering his sentiments, because he is certain he can in this way do greater justice to the argument, and with more effect, than by any assistance it would be in his power to give the cause in the Assembly-house. Whatever be the consequence, he will at least have the satisfaction to reflect that he has done his duty.

INTRODUCTION.

In all the questions wherein religion and morality are concerned, it becomes Christians, especially Protestants, to recur, in the first place, to that which they all acknowledge *an infallible* standard, and Protestants *the only infallible* standard, of truth and right, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. I know not any point of conduct, on which a Christian, if he will impartially consult them, may not find there the amplest information of his duty. The precepts and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in particular, as well as the actions and the writings of his apostles, furnish us with materials in abundance, both for forming our principles, and for directing our practice. In the present controversy, may I be allowed to ask, Has that recourse been had by the parties on either side, to this pure fountain of light, which might have been expected? It does not appear that there has. Let our first inquiry then be, What is the mind of the Spirit on this subject?

It has been pleaded, that the present dispute, in regard to the repeal of certain penal statutes against popery, though it be in part, is not wholly of the religious kind; it is in a great measure also a political question. The safety of the constitution, it is said, in church and state, may be effected by the issue. This, in the second place, will deserve our serious consideration, that we may discover not only what truth there is in it, and to what conclusion it would lead, but who the persons are whom it ought chiefly to influence.

It may not prove unprofitable, in the third place, to inquire briefly what are those expedients which Christians, and especially pastors, in a consistency with both the spirit and the letter of the gospel, are authorised to employ for repressing error and superstition, and promoting the belief and obedience of the truth?

Such a candid and impartial attention as the importance of the subject requires, to the following attempt at solving these questions, is earnestly requested from every pious reader. The

most zealous person, whatever side he has chosen, ought to reflect, that, being a man, he is fallible, and consequently, that it is possible he may be mistaken in his choice. We have the best authority to affirm, that a man may be *zealously* affected, yet not *well* affected *, may, 'have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge †.' Hearken then to the apostle's admonition. 'Believe not every spirit,' not even your own implicitly, for we often 'know not what manner of spirit we 'are of; but try the spirits, whether they be of God, because 'many false prophets are gone out into the world ‡. To the 'law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this 'word, it is because there is no light in them §.'

* Gal. iv. 17.
† Rom. x. 2.
‡ 1 John iv. 1.
§ Isa. viii. 20.

AN

ADDRESS, &c.

CHAP. I.

The Doctrine of the Gospel in regard to Persecution, particularly of Persecutors.

THE name of persecutor is justly become so odious, that I know no sect of Christians who do not disclaim the character with abhorrence. Even papists will not confess that they persecute. By their own account, they only administer wholesome severities, for recovering those who have swerved from the truth, or, if irreclaimable, for deterring others from following their pernicious courses, for defending themselves against their machinations, and for giving a timely check to the contagion of heresy. These, say they, are purposes the most salutary imaginable. They maintain further, that what is done in support of truth, however cruel it may appear, is not persecution; that those punishments only deserve to be branded with that opprobious appellation, which are employed in defence of error. But as they themselves are always in the right, they can never be in hazard of inflicting these.

So says the Romanist, and, by saying so, demonstrates, either that he is himself a persecutor on principle, or else, that there is no such thing as persecution on the earth. For what is any man's immediate criterion of truth, but his own opinions, in which it is but too evident, that the most confident are not always the best founded. On this footing, the more opinionative a man is, (which is far from saying, the more wise he is) the more he feels himself entitled to be the scourge of all who think differently from him. Nor is it possible for any man to have another rule here but the strength of his conviction, which, if it entitle one, entitles all equally, Jew, Pagan, Christian, or Mahometan. I do not know that any beside Roman

Catholics barefacedly avow this doctrine, but I should be justly chargeable with gross partiality, did I aver that no sect but theirs act in a way which this hypothesis alone could justify. Other parties do not, with equal arrogancy, claim infallibility, but often, with greater inconsistency, they exact such a respect to their decisions, as can be vindicated only on the supposition that they are infallible.

The true definition of persecution is to distress men, or harass them with penalties of any kind, on account of an avowed difference in opinion or religious profession. It makes no material odds whether the distress be inflicted by legal authority, or by the exertion of a power altogether lawless. In the former case the evil is chargeable on the community, in the latter solely on the perpetrators and their abettors. But this difference, in regard to the authors, does not alter the nature of the thing. Nor does the greater or less severity of the punishments make any difference but in degree. It is also proper to observe, that the true subject, of either toleration or persecution, is not opinion simply, but opinion professed. To claim to ourselves the merit, that we do not persecute for conscience sake, because we tolerate all the opinions which a man keeps to himself, and never discloses to us, is so exceedingly absurd, that one is at a loss to conceive how a man can be in earnest who advances it *. If that only be persecution which is aimed at sacred and concealed opinion, and if opinion revealed be a proper subject of correction by the magistrate, who does not incur thereby the imputation of intolerance, it is evident that our Lord himself was not persecuted, his apostles were not, as little were the primitive Christians or the Protestants. And who, shall we say, are persecutors by this criterion? This wonderful plea cancels the charge at once against Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, who never wreaked their vengeance against a man's secret sentiments, but always against those

* Short view of the statutes, &c. Rem. iii. 'As to persecution for conscience sake, it is in no case allowable. A man may be an atheist, a blasphemer, an idolater, a rebel, a Papist, or all in one if contradictions can exist together, and yet, if he be only so in his heart, and do not disturb others, no human laws should interfere. Our laws against Popery never did, and never will interfere in this way. They do not allow persecution even of our persecutors.'

which he propagated, or at least professed. Nay, if it were possible to devise a plea that could clear papists themselves from the guilt of persecuting, it would be this.

Having said thus much for fixing the meaning of the word, and ascertaining what is properly denominated *persecution*, I shall enquire into its lawfulness, on the principles of Christianity. Were I to plead the cause of toleration with Pagans, Mahometans, or Deists, I should, for topics of argument, recur directly to the light of reason, and the dictates of conscience; I should examine what the principles of humanity and natural right suggest on this subject. This is the only common ground on which we could enter the lists together. But as it is solely with Christians and Protestants that I am concerned in the discussion of this question, I shall, waving all other topics, recur to *sacred writ*, particularly the NEW TESTAMENT, an authority for which we all profess the profoundest veneration. Here we have a full and unerring directory, in all that concerns the discharge of every Christian duty, particularly in what regards the propagation and defence of the gospel.

The methods whereby, according to the command of our Lord, his religion was to be propagated, were no other than teaching, and the attractive influence of an exemplary life. 'Go,' said Christ to his diciples, 'and teach all nations *. Preach the gospel to every creature †.' And 'Let your light so shine before 'men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Fa-'ther which is in heaven ‡.' And when their doctrine should meet with no return but contempt and scorn, they are enjoined only to warn such despisers, by shaking off the dust of their feet, of the spiritual dangers to which they expose themselves §. Nay, if men should proceed so far as to return them evil for good, and reward their wholesome instructions with persecution, their orders are, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another ‖. In general, with regard to the character they are uniformly to maintain, they are commanded to 'be wise as ser-'pents, but harmless as doves ¶.' This last qualification is added to apprise them, that it is solely the wisdom of the serpent, not his venom and his tooth, that they must endeavour to arm

* Matt. xxviii. 19. † Mark xvi. 15. ‡ Matt. v. 16.
§ Matt. x. 14. ‖ Matt. x. 23. ¶ Matt. x. 16.

themselves with. Indeed, of the whole armour of God to be employed in this warfare, the apostle Paul (if I may so express myself) has given us a catalogue. 'Stand therefore,' says he, 'having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the 'breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the pre-'paration of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of 'faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts 'of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the 'sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying al-'ways with all prayer and supplication, and watching thereunto 'with all perseverance and supplication for all saints *.' Behold the Christian's panoply. But for the use of other arms, offensive or defensive, in the battles of faith, I can find no warrant.

But though this suited the infancy of the church, when she was yet feeble and tender; now that she is grown hardier and more robust, is it not reasonable that she should change her plan, and assume, in addressing her adversaries, a bolder note? Is there no permission given by our Lord, to have recourse, when that should happen, to other weapons? Had his disciples no hint of the propriety, or rather necessity of penal statutes, for adding weight to their teaching, for checking the encroachments of error, and chastising the insolence of those who should dare, in the maturity of the church, to controvert her judgment? Not the slightest suggestion of such an alteration. On the contrary, it appears inconsistent with the nature of the church devised by our Saviour, and modelled by his apostles. Hear himself, in that good confession which he witnessed before Pontius Pilate; 'Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if 'my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, 'that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my 'kingdom not from hence †.' Swords and spears, and all such instruments of hostility, are suited to the defence of secular and worldly kingdoms. If my kingdom were of this world, *then* would my servants fight. But such weapons are preposterous when employed in support of a dispensation quite spiritual and heavenly. In regard to it the order is, 'Put up again thy 'sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall 'perish with the sword ‡.'

* Eph. vi. 14, &c. † John xviii. 36. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 52.

The maxims of the apostles we find entirely conformable to the lessons they had received from their Lord. 'Knowing the 'terror of the Lord,' says Paul, 'we persuade men *.' Our only method is persuasion, not compulsion. The only terrors we set before men, are not the terrors either of the magistrate or of the mob, they are the terrors of the Lord, the dread of incurring the divine displeasure, and the tremendous judgment of the world to come; as, on the other hand, the only allurements are the divine promises. 'Though we walk in the flesh,' says the same apostle, 'we do not war after the flesh. For the 'weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God 'to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, 'and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge 'of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obe-'dience of Christ †.' Are those spiritual weapons now so blunted, that without the coarse implements supplied by human laws, they would be of no utility? In regard to gainsayers and adversaries, we are taught, that as 'the servant of the Lord must 'not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient,' so he is in particular to 'instruct in meekness those that oppose 'themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to 'the acknowledging of the truth ‡.' Meekly and patiently to teach is the duty of the minister; the effect of this teaching, that is, the conversion of the sinner, or the conviction of the erring, must be left to the supreme disposer of events. The very utmost enjoined Christians in regard to the obstinate and irreclaimable, is, after repeated unsuccessful attempts and admonitions, to avoid their company §.

The disciple ought doubtless to be formed on the amiable pattern exhibited by his master, whose character it was, as delineated by the prophet, that he would not contend nor raise a clamour, nor make his voice be heard in the streets, that he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax ‖; who was not less eminent for all the mild and gentle virtues, humility, condescension, candour, humanity, and benignity, than for those which excite higher admiration, patience, firmness, fortitude, purity, and justice, not to mention the most

* 2 Cor. v. 11. † 2 Cor. x. 3, &c. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 24.
§ Tit. iii. 10. ‖ Isa. xlii. 2, 3.

comprehensive benevolence or love. So remarkably did those shine forth in all the ordinary occurrences of his life, and so deep seems the impression to have been that they generally made, that Paul alludes to this feature in our Lord's character as to a thing universally known and felt, and even recurs to it as a form of obtesting, the more effectually to engage attention and persuade. 'Now I Paul myself,' says he, 'beseech you by the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ *.' These are the qualities by which he himself from the beginning attracted the notice of the people. 'I am meek and lowly in heart †.' His discourses were not more energetic than they were gracious. They breathed humanity and kindness to a degree that astonished all. The graciousness, no less than the authority with which he spoke, excited universal admiration ‡. In short, the fellow-feeling he had of our infirmities, his patience and forbearance towards the refractory, his compassion of the ignorant, and even of them that were out of the way, were, more than his miracles, the instruments by which the thickest spiritual darkness was dispelled, the most inveterate prejudices surmounted, the hearts even of the most reluctant won, and the world subdued to the obedience of the faith.

Is it not most natural to think, that a cause will be best supported by the same means by which it was founded, and by which it received its first footing in the earth? Ought there not to appear in the servant some portion, some traces of the spirit of the master? To the dispensation of the gospel, which is the dispensation of grace, mercy, and peace, ought there not to be a suitableness in the methods employed to promote it? Shall we then think of any expedient for defending the cause of Christ, different from those which he himself and his apostles so successfully employed? Nay, it were well if all that could be said were, that we employ different measures from those employed by them. Some of ours, I am afraid, on examination, will be found to be the reverse of theirs. Christ engaged by being lovely, we would constrain by being frightful. The former conquers the heart, the latter at most but forces an external and hypocritical compliance, a thing hateful to God, and dishonourable to the cause of his Son.

* 2 Cor. x. 1. † Matt. xi. 29. ‡ Luke iv. 22.—Matt. vii. 28, 29.

But, say our opponents in this argument, popery is a superstition so baneful as not to deserve any favour, especially at the hands of Protestants. Its intolerance to them, and persecuting spirit, if there were nothing else we had to accuse it of, would be sufficient to justify the severest treatment we could give it. This treatment to papists could not be called persecution, but just retaliation, or the necessary means of preventing perdition to ourselves. I do not say that either popery or papists deserve favour from us. On the contrary, I admit the truth of the charge against them, but not the consequence ye would draw from it. Let popery be as black as ye will. Call it Beelzebub, if ye please. It is not by Beelzebub that I am for casting out Beelzebub, but by the Spirit of God. We exclaim against popery, and in exclaiming against it, we betray but too manifestly, that we have imbibed of the character for which we detest it. In the most unlovely spirit of popery, and with the unhallowed arms of popery, we would fight against popery. It is not by such weapons that God has promised to consume *the man of sin*, but it is by *the breath of his mouth*, that is, *his word* *. As for us, though we be often loud enough in our pretensions to faith, our faith is not in his word. We have no faith now in weapons invisible and impalpable. Fire and steel suit us a great deal better. Christians, in ancient times, confided in the divine promises; we, in these days, confide in acts of Parliament. They trusted to the sword of the Spirit, for the defence of truth and the defeat of error; we trust to the sword of the magistrate. God's promises do well enough, when the legislature is their surety. But if ye destroy the hedges and the bulwarks which the laws have raised, we shall cry with Israel in the days of Ezekiel, 'Behold, our bones are dried, our hope 'is lost, we are cut off for our parts †.' There is no more security for the true religion. Protestantism is gone! all is lost! We shall all be papists presently. Shall we never reflect on the denunciation of the prophet, 'Cursed be the man that

* 2 Thess. ii. 8. In our translation it is *the spirit of his mouth*. The original term signifies, *breath, wind, spirit*. When it is connected with mouth, lips, or nostrils, as in this passage, it ought to be rendered *breath*. There is doubtless an allusion to Hos. vi. 5. 'I have slain them by the words of my mouth.'

† Ezek. xxxvii. 11.

'trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart 'departeth from the Lord.' Let me tell those people, so distrustful in God's providence and promises, and so confident in the arm of flesh, that the true religion never flourished so much, never spread so rapidly, as when, instead of persecuting, it was persecuted, instead of obtaining support from human sanctions, it had all the terrors of the magistrate and of the laws armed against it. 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we 'stronger than he *?'

Ye say, 'popery deserves no favour;' but are the deserts of others, the rule of our conduct towards them? Does the institution of Christ command, or even permit us to retaliate the injuries of others? Is the great rule which he has given us, as containing the sum of the law and the prophets, 'Whatsoever 'ye find that others do unto you, do ye also so unto them?' Is it, 'Remember to render good for good, and evil for evil to 'every man?' Has our Lord adopted the adage of the Pharisees, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy?' Has he said, 'Bless them that bless you, and curse them that curse 'you; and for them that spitefully use you and persecute you, 'be sure that, when ye have it in your power, ye spitefully use 'and persecute them in return?' If this be the language of Christ, I have done; my reasoning is at an end, and I have totally mistaken the matter. But if, in every article, it is opposite, if that authority which ought ever to be held by Christians, of all authorities the most venerable, has enjoined, not 'Whatsoever men do,' but, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should 'do to you, do ye even so to them †,' if the law of retaliation which says *Eye for eye and tooth for tooth*, is expressly set aside ‡, and his commandment is, 'Love your enemies, do good 'to them that hate you; bless them that curse you, and pray 'for them that despitefully use you and persecute you §.' If these, I say, are the dictates of Christ, how indecent, not to give it a worse name, must any argument appear in the mouth of a Christian, which subverts the fundamental maxims of the master he professes to serve. Not to mention, that there is real injustice in retaliation on sects and parties, when they are

* 1 Cor. x. 22.
† Matt. vii. 12.
‡ Matt. v. 38, &c.
§ Matt. v. 44.

not the same individuals on whom we retaliate with those who committed the cruelties complained of. Popery is doubtless a most intolerant religion, yet it would be both uncharitable and unjust to deny that there are many papists who would not persecute. Protestantism, from its radical principles, is much more tolerant: it would, notwithstanding, be most uncandid, rather indeed contemptibly partial, to affirm, that Protestants have never persecuted.

I am not ignorant that there are Christian commentators, who, by their glosses, elude the force of the plainest precepts of our Lord, much in the way the Jewish rabbies invalidated the commandments of God. 'Christ,' say such, 'does not 'mean, in those expressions, the enemies of our nation, much 'less the enemies of our faith; it is only personal enemies he 'is speaking of.' That all sorts of enemies are included, there is not a shadow of ground to doubt. But that he had much more an eye to the enemies of our religion than either to national or to personal foes, will be evident to those who attentively consider the scope of this divine discourse. The very kinds of injuries specified, are those he had expressly told them, they would be made to suffer for his name's sake. And one principal view, of those sublime instructions, is plainly to fortify their minds, and prepare them for bearing properly what they must soon expect to meet with, purely on account of religion.

But the precepts of our Lord are best illustrated by his example. It may therefore be worth while to examine in what manner he was affected with regard to the antipathy and mutual rancour that subsisted in his time between the Jews and the Samaritans. These stood on a footing with each other somewhat similar (but incomparably worse) to that of Protestants and Papists amongst us before the late alarms. As to the principles on which they differed, Jesus explicitly declared for his countrymen the Jews. 'Ye worship ye know not what,' said he to the woman of Samaria, 'we know what we worship, 'for salvation is of the Jews *.' Did he therefore adopt the passions of his countrymen? Did he betray the smallest particle of the malignity with which they were inflamed towards a people

* John iv. 22.

whose schism and distinguishing tenets he was as ready to condemn as they? Let his conduct, on the occasion referred to, serve for an answer to the question. He entered freely into conversation with the woman, and did not disdain to ask her, though a Samaritan, to supply him with a little water. This (however small a matter it may appear to us) exceedingly surprised her, knowing the inhospitable maxims to which both parties, but especially the Jews, so rigidly adhered. Nor did his condescension and affability more surprise this stranger, than they did his own disciples on their return, who marvelled that he talked with the woman. Probably nothing less than the very great respect they entertained for their master, hindered them from being scandalized at his moderation, which in any other person they would have denominated lukewarmness in the cause of religion, and want of zeal against the enemies of God's people. Ye know what followed. He stayed with them two days, and made many converts.

Nor was this the only occasion he took of showing his disapprobation of the intemperate zeal of his countrymen, in regard to that people. A lawyer once, to try him, asked, 'Who 'is my neighbour *?' Our blessed Lord, knowing the corrupt explanations, on this head, current among the Jews, especially among those of this man's profession, knowing also that a direct answer could serve only to awaken cavil and contradiction, did, in order to surmount his prejudices, address himself, as was usual with him on all moral questions, directly to the heart. Ye have his answer in the well known parable of the traveller who fell among thieves, and who, though a Jew, was overlooked by a priest and a Levite his countrymen, and relieved by a Samaritan. The intention, which shines forth conspicuously throughout the whole, was to stigmatize, in the strongest manner, that unrelenting bigotry, that inhuman intolerance, which, through the wonderful influence of self-deceit, both parties cherished in themselves, under the notion of zeal for God and love to their country; it was to mollify their minds towards each other, and bring them to admit a reciprocal affection producing an interchange of good offices. If the parable had represented the sympathy as exercised by a tender-hearted Jew towards a

* Luke x. 29, &c.

suffering Samaritan, his purpose had been frustrated. The proud Pharisee, untouched by the misfortunes of people he abhorred, would have remonstrated that his countryman, instead of acting laudably, in assisting one whom he would denominate an adversary of God, had acted shamefully and weakly, in allowing the nobler principles of zeal and patriotism, to be overcome by womanish pity. But its being represented as exercised by a Samaritan to a Jew, gave a different aspect to the whole. It laid open at once the dignity and humanity of the action. It was impossible to withhold approbation. The approved, nay admired generosity of an enemy was too strong an argument to approve the like generous conduct on the other side, for one who could make any pretensions to reason and justice, to resist. Our Lord, after relating the parable, appeals to the lawyer himself for the answer to his own question. 'Which now of these 'three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among 'the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. 'Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.' Act thyself the worthy part which thou canst not but commend in another. Think every man thy neighbour, and entitled to the offices of charity and humanity, who stands in need of thy assistance. Let no personal feud, no national enmity, no opposition of religion, prove an obstruction to the exercise of the godlike principle of love. Surely then we are not at liberty to do evil to those to whom we are commanded to do good.

On another occasion, after cleansing ten lepers, it did not escape our Lord's observation, nor did he fail to make it be remarked by others, that the only grateful person, who returned to give God thanks, was a Samaritan *, a sure evidence, that it is not always just to conclude the badness of men's disposition or practice from the falsity of some of their religious tenets. This single heterodox sectary had more piety and gratitude than the nine more orthodox Jews. In general, it deserves to be remarked, that the zeal of our blessed Master, far from leading him to inflame the minds of the populace against those who maintained erroneous doctrines in religion, influenced him, on the contrary, to moderate their heat, and bring them to make every candid allowance for differences, even gross corruptions in

* Luke xvii. 16, &c.

principle, which, from whatever guilty causes they originated, might be, in those who then entertained them, the natural effects of accidental circumstances.

A Pharisee of those days, a very zealous sect, though their zeal was of a different complexion from our Lord's, a fast friend, in his own account, to the Jewish interest and religion, might have plausibly exclaimed against this lukewarmness, as he would have termed it. 'Would this teacher persuade us', might such a one say, 'to forget the days of our forefathers, and the sufferings they endured from the hands of Samaritans? Can we, 'without uneasiness for ourselves, receive these instruments of 'cruelty into favour? Are we altogether unconcerned for what 'may be the fate of generations yet unborn? Ought we ever to 'forget what trouble they gave to our ancestors in the days of 'Cyrus, how they exerted themselves, to the utmost, to frustrate their pious purpose of rebuilding the house of the Lord *? 'Is this a subject on which we can be silent? Must we overlook all their malicious and insidious attempts against our nation, the calumnies they wrote to Artaxerxes, representing us 'as irreconcileable enemies and rebels, in order to incense that 'monarch against us, and excite him to exterminate us from 'the face of the earth? Can we ever cease to remember their 'insults, their ambushes, and their plots to massacre our progenitors, who were reduced to the greatest distress through 'their malice, insomuch that our builders were under the hard 'necessity of working in the work of God's house with one 'hand, whilst they held a weapon for the defence of their lives 'with the other, and durst not, for fear of being surprised, put 'off their clothes day or night †? Shall all their treacherous 'schemes to circumvent us be for ever obliterated, their hypocritical professions, their lying rumours, their hireling prophets ‡?' This is but a specimen of the materials for invective which this subject would have afforded to the zealots of those days. For many other such accusations, undeniably true, might have been brought from the later parts also of their history. From all which they might have exclaimed, much in the strain of some late publications, and with equal plausibility and justice, 'Is it come to this? Are we so degenerate, as to be persuaded

* Ezra iv. † Neh. iv. ‡ Neh. vi.

'by any man to destroy the fences of our religion, to break 'down our barriers, and hug Samaritans in our bosom, to put 'these enemies of God and man on the same footing with our 'brethren and countrymen, and to love them as our friends and 'neighbours? The days have been when Jews did not need 'any warning of this kind.'

It is but too manifest that at the very time that our Saviour sought to cure his kinsmen the Jews, of that bitter ungodly zeal with which they were affected to the Samaritans, the latter had not abated a tittle of their ancient bigotry against the Jews. In proof of this, witness the treatment which Christ himself received from them, when passing through their country in his way to Jerusalem, near the time of the passover *. 'When the time was 'come,' says the sacred historian, 'that he should be received 'up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent mes-'sengers before his face; and they went and entered into a vil-'lage of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.' Probably no Jew but himself would, particularly on this occasion, have chosen to be their guest. But his condescension and liberality of mind were ill understood by that bigotted race, and worse requited. 'They did not receive him; because his face was as though he 'would go to Jerusalem.' They would not so much as suffer him to come under their roof. Their reason was; he was going to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover. This was matter of high offence. One great article of dispute between the two nations, was, whether Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen as the seat of his temple, where sacrifice should be offered and the festivals kept, or mount Gerizzim in Samaria. His going at this time to the Jewish capital, showed plainly his opinion on the controverted point. This opposition to their judgment their pride could not brook. In all fiery zeal, if men would but be impartial with themselves, they would find a greater share of pride at bottom, than they are willing either to perceive or acknowledge. 'And when his disciples James and 'John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command 'fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, even as 'Elias did?' Ah! How much did they still retain not only of the prejudices, but of the furious zeal of the Pharisees! How

* Luke x. 51, &c.

little had they imbibed of the amiable disposition of their master! Nothing so like a bigot of one side as a bigot of the other. Though they hate one another mortally, they are, in the internal frame of their mind, essentially the same. Their differences are in comparison merely circumstantial and external. If the unreasonableness and bad temper of one side, could justify the unreasonableness and bad temper of the opposite, this outrageous zeal of the two disciples would make that of the Samaritans appear very moderate. 'But Jesus turned and rebuked them, 'and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For 'the son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save 'them. And they went to another village.'

This rebuke given to two apostles should, methinks, make men a little more modest in regard to their zealous fervours, lest they also be found, on examination, totally to mistake the spirit they are of. Pride, which can tolerate neither opposition nor contradiction, which takes fire at every affront, real or imagined, particularly an affront offered to the understanding, by an avowed difference of judgment, and that resentment which is the natural offspring of pride, are but too apt to screen their deformity under the decent garb of zeal. This rebuke, however, serves to teach us that the destructive zeal neither partakes of the spirit of our master, nor is adapted to promote the end of his coming. Pure and holy and harmless was that zeal, that heavenly flame by which he was actuated. Like that which Moses saw in the bush *, it burned, but consumed nothing. 'They went to another village,' says the evangelist. He pocketed this public affront, as the men of the world would say, and meanly left the insult unrevenged. Had the Samaritans deserved this lenity and indulgence at his hands, or at the hands of the Jewish nation? Far from it. But his inquiry was not what *they* deserved, but what it became *him* to do, what suited the cause of piety, humanity, and universal love in which he was engaged. The question, 'Have they deserved this favour?' used in the way it has been of late, savours very little of the disciple of him who said, 'If ye love them which love you, 'what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And 'if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others†?'

* Exod. iii. 8. † Matt. v. 46, 47.

It is remarkable, that among the many slanders cast upon our Lord by his enemies, one of them was, that he was a Samaritan. Calumny, an insidious liar, seeks always, in order to gain credit to her lies, to give them some sort of connection with truth; for this renders them more efficacious in imposing on the rabble. Somewhat of this artifice appears in all the aspersions thrown upon our Lord. It was then impossible that, from such a people, his open disapprobation of the virulence with which they spoke of Samaritans, and the inhumanity which they harboured in their hearts against them, should not draw upon him that ignominious epithet. And if things proceed but a little longer with us, in the train they have been in of late, may we not expect to see every man of moderation amongst us, who values a conformity to the spirit and precepts of his master, more highly than the blind applause of the deluded multitude, branded as a papist, or at least a friend to popery?

Some have proceeded so far, as was lately observed by an honourable gentleman in the House of Commons, as to publish inflammatory pamphlets recommending the dissolution of all the bonds of society with papists. The author seems to have taken the Jewish treatment of the Samaritans, which our Lord so plainly reprobates, for his model. I freely own, my model is the reverse of his. It is the disposition and sentiments of Jesus Christ. I am glad to find that those who have assumed the title of *Friends of the protestant Interest*, (however much I disapprove their conduct in other respects) have, with marks of disapprobation, disclaimed the unchristian performance. In regard to the writer, my first and most earnest wish is, that, by the blessing of God, he may arrive at the knowledge of Christianity, and become a Christian himself; for hitherto his knowledge has gone no deeper than the surface. And if that wish cannot be obtained, my second is, that he may no longer dishonour the name of protestant, if he bear that name, but turn papist altogether, of which he is more than two-thirds already, and these two-thirds not the most amiable part of the character.

But to return; if, with respect to retaliation, such were the maxims of our Lord Jesus Christ, as has been represented, and such was the pattern given by him, can we, who profess to be

his disciples, imagine that these ought to have no influence in determining our conduct? Had the apostle Peter any meaning, or were they mere words of course that he used in telling us, that we are specially called to the imitation of Christ, 'who 'when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he 'threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth 'righteously *.' Was it meant to serve for a lesson to us, or as a vain boast of his own virtue, and that of his fellow-apostles, that Paul exclaimed, 'Being reviled, we bless; being perse-'cuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat †.' But perhaps they did so, because they were *then* weak, and could do nothing better. They could not *then* retaliate in so effectual a manner as to answer their purpose, and therefore thought it prudent to submit, and make the best of the circumstances which they could not remedy. I have heard that some popish casuists, when pushed by adversaries who contrasted their methods of propagating the faith with those of the apostles, have replied in this manner: but I should be sorry to think that any protestant were capable of adopting a casuistry which tarnishes, or rather annihilates, the most shining virtues of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and renders their example of little or no significancy to us.

Thus, I hope, it has been made sufficiently evident that neither the example nor the precepts either of Christ, the divine author of the evangelical institution, or of his apostles, authorise the use of the sword or any such carnal weapons for the advancement of religion; that they fortify our minds with meekness, faith, and patience to bear, but in no case permit us to inflict persecution, not even in requital of that which we ourselves have formerly been made to suffer; that the necessary consequence of such unsanctified measures is to subvert the *power*, for the sake of establishing the *form*, of godliness, and to make us sacrifice the *spirit* of our religion, that charity which animates the whole, to a mere lifeless *figure*.

* 1 Peter ii. 21, &c. † 1 Cor. iv. 13.

CHAP. II.

The Conclusions to which sound Policy would lead us, in regard to the Toleration of papists.

As to the propriety, considered in a political light, of giving such a toleration to papists in Scotland, as has been already granted in England and Ireland, I must observe, in the first place, that this is a point, the decision of which belongs properly to the legislature. To me it appears particularly improper in ecclesiastical judicatories to meddle with it. It is a question solely regarding the safety of the body politic. If the constitution will not be endangered by such a measure, the principles of reason, and consequently of sound policy, and also the principles of Christianity, as has been shown, lead us to conclude that it ought to be adopted; otherwise, not. Now the question in regard to the danger of the constitution is surely of the department of the estates of the kingdom assembled in parliament.—And though every little borough-corporation, parish meeting, society of artificers and others, corporate and not corporate, weavers, coblers, porters, &c. &c. presume that they are wise enough to direct the King, Lords, and Commons, and that they themselves understand better what concerns the interest, security, and government of the nation, this absurd conduct cannot hurt societies. They have no reputation to lose. Great allowances ought to be made, and will be made, by superiors, for their folly and ignorance. But would it become the supreme judicatory, and representative of this national church, in imitation of such examples, to step out of their line, and, without the most urgent necessity, to obtrude upon the legislative body, their advice unasked? Nothing, in my opinion, would more effectually lessen the dignity of that venerable court. There is but one case in which I conceive there would be any propriety in such a measure; and of this I shall take notice afterwards.

But some will object, 'Why do you talk of going beyond 'our line? Are not our ecclesiastical assemblies the natural

'guardians of our religion? Who then so proper as they to 'give warning of the danger, and to use the precautions which 'ought to be employed, in order to prevent it or ward it off?' I do not know precisely what meaning ye affix to the word *guardians*; but in one sense I certainly admit that both our pastors and our ecclesiastical judicatories are guardians in their several spheres. But this implies no more than that, when they apprehend danger, they ought to double their diligence in using the spiritual weapons above taken notice of, which the gospel supplies them with, for defending the people against seduction of every kind; and that, if there has been any remissness in discharging the ministerial duties in time past, there may be more vigilance and greater exertions in time to come. But their guardianship, I imagine, never extended so far as to entitle them, from any fancied necessity, to counteract the very spirit of their religion, and, for their master's service, to oppose alike his precepts and example. Yet such is manifestly the nature of that recourse to the secular arm, so strenuously argued for by some; a recourse which originated among papists, and would have been left with papists, if protestants had been in all respects consistent with themselves *.

But however improper it may be in our judicatories, as such, to interfere with the legislature in this affair, we may be permitted as individuals in this land of liberty, for the sake of quieting the minds of well-meaning people, freely to canvass the question of the expediency of the projected toleration. This is the privilege, if used discreetly, of all British subjects, in regard to public measures. I shall, therefore, with all due deference to my superiors, submit my sentiments on this head to the candid examination of the reader.

It has been said, and very justly, that in every state, as in every individual, there is a right of self-preservation, which implies, amongst other things, that of protecting itself against violence offered, either from without or from within, from foreign

* Short view, Rem. iii. 'The very name of religious toleration is justly dear 'to every Protestant.' He must be very shallow who does not perceive that with such Protestants as these writers, it is then only *the name* that is dear. 'The idea of persecution for conscience sake is most odious and detestable.' Qu. Have they expected to be read by none but fools?

hostile states, or from its own seditious and corrupt members, and consequently of repelling force by force. It has been urged further, that it is the duty of the magistrate, who is the trustee, and consequently the servant, of the state, not only to defend the community when attacked, but to watch for its safety, and, by every just method which the constitution empowers him to use, that is, as far as his trust extends, to prevent every danger which may be foreseen, as well as to remove that which is present. Both positions are in my opinion undeniable.

Now on these, and on these only, is founded the magistrate's title to interfere with religious sects. Opinion is naturally beyond the jurisdiction of magistracy, whose proper object is public peace or national prosperity. As this cannot be injured or interrupted by men otherwise than by their actions, these are strictly all that are immediately cognizable by civil judicatories. As however it is unquestionable, that opinion has great influence on practice, so the open profession of such opinions as are manifestly subversive of the natural or civil rights of the society, or of the rights of individual members of the society, is undoubtedly to be regarded as an overt act which falls under the cognizance of the magistrate. It is only in this view that opinion ought ever to be held, as coming under his jurisdiction. Considered in a religious view, as true or false, orthodox or heterodox, and consequently as affecting our spiritual and eternal interests, it is certainly not of the department of the secular powers. Yet this distinction has not always been observed. And those in power, from considerations of a spiritual nature, which were totally without their province, have thought themselves bound, by the most sacred ties, to do all they could for the encouragement of their own opinions, because supposed to be sound, and for the suppression of every opinion as unsound, which stood opposed to them.

Hence that spirit of intolerance which has for many centuries proved the bane of Christendom, and which still continues the bane of many countries in Europe, as well as in other quarters of the globe. Nothing can be more evident, than that if the magistrate is entitled, nay obliged, by all the weight of his authority, to crush opinions, merely because erroneous, and con-

ceived by him pernicious to the soul, this obligation must be inherent in the office of magistracy, and consequently incumbent on every magistrate. Now, as his only immediate rule for what he is bound to cherish, and what to crush, is, and can be no other than, his own opinions, and (the magistrate having no more claim than private persons to infallible direction) as the same variety of sentiments may be, nay in different ages and nations has been, in those of this rank as in those of any other; it will be found, on this hypothesis, the duty of rulers to suppress and persecute in one country, and at one period, what it is the duty of rulers in another country, or even in the same country at another period, to cherish and protect. This consequence, how absurd soever, is fairly deducible from the aforesaid principle, and ought therefore to be held a sufficient demonstration of the absurdity of that principle. One of the many unhappy consequences which has flowed from the iniquitous but general practice of acting in conformity to that false tenet, is, that the minds of parties, even those whose differences in opinion are merely speculative, and could never, if left to themselves, have affected the peace of society, have been exasperated against one another. Jealousy and envy have arisen, and been fostered by mutual injuries. Every sect has been led to view in every other a rival and an enemy, a party from which, if raised to power, it would have every thing to dread. And as this almost equally affects both sides, each has played the tyrant in its turn. As men's conduct is influenced more by passion than by cool reflection, all have been very slow in discovering the falsity of the principle, the magistrate's right of interfering, when there is no visible danger to the state; this right, though sometimes controverted by the weaker party, the prevalent sect has always affirmed and defended, thinking itself entitled to a monopoly of the principle, as being alone, in its own account, on the side of truth. The remembrance too of injuries received, instead of opening their eyes, and showing them the ruinous consequences of that radical error, has but served to rivet them in it, and make them avail themselves of it in their turn. Nay, so inconsistent a creature is man! Those who but a little before strenuously maintained the right of private judgment, are no sooner raised to power, than they obstinately refuse that

right to others. As they have been accustomed to look on the other party as enemies, and have been badly treated by them, they think they derive hence an additional right to persecute them from the law of retaliation.

This, I acknowledge, renders religious sects in another view, an object of attention to the magistrate. A party whose avowed principles, considered by themselves, have nothing hostile to society, may, from its strength and habitual enmity to the predominant sect, endanger the public peace. Hence it may happen, that civil governors, though perfectly indifferent which of two sects they shall favour, may find it incompatible with the safety of the state, to give equal countenance to both: Perfect equality, where there is reciprocal hatred, could not long subsist, without giving rise to reciprocal hostilities. The utmost vigilance could not always prevent this effect, which might, in the end, overturn the constitution. But where the public tranquillity has been long the sole object of the magistrate, there is hardly any risk of his adopting those measures which cause men's minds to rankle, and produces in their breasts that most unlovely and unchristian disposition one towards another.

It is admitted, that when the public peace is in danger, it is his duty to interpose. Sedition or rebellion is not entitled to take shelter in religious sentiments, nor can the plea of liberty of conscience justly avail any man, for invading the liberty or property, sacred or civil, of another. So much for what appears to be the original rights of the civil power in what concerns sects in religion. It must be owned, however, that there are many particular circumstances, which, when they occur, ought, in a great measure, to restrain the exertion of a power otherwise warrantable. When parties are already formed, and of long continuance, though their fundamental principles be unfriendly to the rights of society, their numbers, and weight, and other considerations, may render an indulgence, otherwise unmerited, the more eligible measure, because in its consequences the less evil. It may however be remarked, in passing, that though there be several prudential considerations which may render it proper to extend favour to those whose tenets, or temper, or both, show that they but ill deserve it, no consideration can give the magistrate a right to persecute any party whose

principles, viewed in a political light, are nowise unfriendly to the rights of their fellow-citizens, or of the state, and whose disposition and conduct is peaceable and inoffensive.

Now to apply the principles above laid down to the case in hand; what shall we say of the tenets of papists in regard to the secular powers? Are they, or are they not friendly to civil government in general, or to the present government of this island in particular? As to the first of these questions, all papists, it must be owned, acknowledge a certain obedience to be due to a foreign and independent power, the pope. And though this, by some of them (for they are not unanimous) is said to be only in spirituals, yet, in matters of jurisdiction, it has never been possible to ascertain the precise boundary between spirituals and temporals. Nor can it be denied that, in doubtful cases, superstition inclines strongly to favour the claims of the former. This if it should be an error, the superstitious always consider as the safer error of the two. And in regard to the second question, they were, doubtless, till of late, in this part of the island, generally disaffected to the present royal family. Nor could any person wonder that it was so, considering the cause of the abdication of James VII. grandfather to the Pretender.

As to the aspect which their tenets bear to civil society, for it is neither in a religious nor in a moral view, but solely in a political, that I am here considering them, it must be acknowledged that to social union their principles are nowise adverse. Witness those kingdoms and states in Europe, where the whole, or the greater part, of the people are popish. It has been remarked, however, that the Romish religion is not equally favourable to a free government as the Protestant. But though there be something like a servility of spirit in implicit faith, or the belief of infallibility in any human tribunal, which is more congenial to political slavery, it cannot be said that the former is incompatible with civil freedom. This country, as well as others, was free, even when Roman Catholic; and it would not be just to deny that there have been of that communion, eminent patrons of the liberties of the people.

As to the aspect with which the party in general (I speak not of individuals) eyes other sects, it is certainly very unfavourable. Her doctrine concerning the spiritual state, both here and here-

after, of all who dare dispute her decisions, whom she denominates heretics and schismatics, does not tend to cherish affection towards them. In this, however, she is not singular. The case is the same with all fanatical sects. But as temper is not formed entirely by principle, but is often as much the result of habit and accidental circumstances, there are great differences in this respect in different places. In those popish countries, where they have none of any different set living among them, and little occasion to know any thing of such but by the representations of their priests, it cannot be doubted, that the people put protestants almost in the same class with demons. They consider them as a sort of devils incarnate. I must acknowledge, that, in those protestant countries, or those parts of protestant countries where they have no papists, and consequently know nothing of them but by hearsay, their judgment is equally unfavourable. But in those nations which have long enjoyed the blessings of peace and toleration, where protestants and papists live together, as in Holland, where both are protected, and neither is allowed to injure the other, they come soon to consider each other as human creatures and brethren, and to contract mutual friendships and intimacies, scarcely minding the difference of religious sentiments. And even in this country, it is notorious, that in those parts where papists are least known, they are most hated and dreaded. There is nothing which more strongly recommends toleration to a benevolent heart, than that it has a powerful tendency to humanize the tempers of the most opposite sects, and conciliate them to a friendly intercourse of good offices to one another. This serves to lay the mind open to conviction, by removing gently and gradually those rooted prejudices which are the greatest obstruction to it.

Upon the whole, the question comes to this, whether so inconsiderable a party (for both in number of people and in property, their proportion is so very small as not to be worth mentioning) of such a character as is above delineated, (and I have endeavoured to do it with the utmost impartiality, neither exaggerating nor extenuating their faults) can be of any danger to the constitution of this country? It ought always to be taken into consideration, that it is not proposed that they be admitted into any, even the lowest offices of magistracy or legislation, or

any place of public trust. It ought also to be remembered, that if at any time any unforeseen evil or danger should arise from that quarter, the legislature, of which they can make no part, and on which, considering their very great inferiority in all respects, they can have no conceivable influence, have it always in their power to give a timely check to it.

In regard to the malign aspect of popery towards sectaries, as she calls them, whom doubtless she considers as rebellious children; has not experience in this and other countries, fully evinced, that even papists can be softened by good usage; that lenity and toleration deaden the asperity which the bare name of heretic (till they become familiarized to their persons) raises in their minds: And as to the disaffection of which they are suspected to the reigning family, why should we judge more harshly of them on this head, than of those protestants amongst us, much more numerous, who have been known formerly to have the same attachments to the Stuart family with them? I do not speak thus to raise an odium against any party. I would be the last man in Britain to attempt it. Besides, it is evident to every one who reflects, that we can have nothing to fear from our nonjurors, a party which has been sensibly declining for many years past. I only mention them for the sake of observing, that if we admit that many families, once in that way, have, within these last thirty years, changed their political creed, it does not seem reasonable to suspect, that many papists, in the same time, may not have changed theirs.

In some respects the change is less to papists than to them. The divine right of monarchial government on the patriarchal plan, as it is called, and consequently the indefeasible hereditary right of the abdicated family to the crown of these realms, is no principle of popery. The attachment of papists was a personal attachment, or at most a consequence of their attachment to the cause for which that family suffered. But in regard to forms of government, or particular governors, their religion leaves them at full liberty. A papist may be a republican, or a friend to monarchy, absolute or limited. In these matters he is no way confined by his religion. And that he should change in an attachment not founded in principle, is nothing extraordinary. He may be convinced that prescription

takes place in government, and, for the peace of society, ought to take place, as well as in other matters; that, without admitting this principle, there would be few or no legal rulers now existing in the world, as most sovereignties may be traced backwards to manifest usurpation. Whatever judgment therefore he may form of the revolution, there is no inconsistency in his being a loyal subject to the present royal family. And in regard to such as shall take the oath prescribed by the act of parliament for England, or the like oath proposed for papists here, I shall only say that it would be extremely uncharitable to suppose them all perjured.

But as some things have been plausibly urged against the credibility of their oaths, it may be worth while to bestow, on this point, a little more attention. It is said, 'The dispensing 'power of the pope, his infallibility, the principle that no faith 'is to be kept with heretics, all serve to invalidate their pro-'mises and oaths, especially when given to those whom they 'regard as heretics.' That the popes have claimed such a dispensing power in loosing the obligation of the most solemn vows and contracts, and that many people have been blind enough to credit this most arrogant and impious claim, it would be to give the lie to all history, even the most authentic, to deny. Such also is the power they have claimed and exercised of deposing kings and emperors, and of loosing their subjects from their allegiance. Such also are their pretensions to infallibility, their corrupt maxims, subversive of faith given to heretics, in all which they have been supported by hireling and prostitute writers among the clergy, friars, canonists, and expectants of preferment in the church. But to say thus much is one thing, and to say that these points are received universally as doctrines of the church is another. We ought to be just even to enemies.

In regard to the last of the above maxims, that faith is not to be kept to heretics, though it was never asserted, in so many words, by any council, it is unquestionable, that the council of Constance came so near giving it their sanction, in the decree they pronounced for the ease of the emperor's conscience, whom they had seduced to act a most perfidious part, as well as in the whole of their infamous proceedings with regard to Huss, that

though it cannot be called an established principle of their religion, it has received that countenance from the spiritual powers among them, which furnishes but too good a handle for the clamours and jealousies of protestants. And I will acknowledge, in passing, that as I could put no confidence, where religion is concerned, in the faith of a man who would vindicate a procedure so subversive of that security in engagements which is the most essential bond of society, so I can never consider that man as dangerous, who, in this age and country, has the egregious folly to attempt the vindication. But in general, when recourse is had to experience, I am satisfied, there is no ground to consider it as a maxim, so prevalent in that party, as to destroy all faith in their promises. If its prevalence were so great, what hindered them in England, from taking the oath of supremacy, or the formula in Scotland? These would have secured them against many inconveniencies to which their religion exposed them. And if there be some instances of their swearing falsely, from the temptation of interest, can we say that perjury is absolutely unexampled amongst ourselves? It is well known that in England, papists had it in their power to relieve themselves, by means of certain oaths, before the passing of the late act. But those oaths were different from that now enacted. Now a man who thinks he may take oaths, and be under no obligation, or who thinks he has it in his power to obtain a dispensation from that obligation, has no reason to make any distinction between one oath and another. The dispensing power serves equally for all. Now that those in England, who, on no consideration, could be induced to take the oaths formerly required, do not hesitate to take that required by the late act, is evidence sufficient to a reasonable person, that they consider this as what they may, with a good conscience, take, but not the former.

'But how is it possible,' some will object, 'that they can 'conscientiously abjure so many high prerogatives of the so-'vereign pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, and vicar of Jesus 'Christ? Such are his dispensing power, his supremacy in tem-'porals, and his infallibility; since it is unquestionable that 'these prerogatives he has both claimed, and pretended to 'exercise?' To this I can only answer, that it is a known fact,

that Roman Catholics themselves are not unanimous in regard to the justice of those claims. For example, it is a tenet universally held by them, that the church is infallible. But in the explanation of this tenet they differ exceedingly, as well as in the directions they give where we ought to seek for her unerring oracles. Some send us to the pope, with whom alone, according to them, this amazing privilege is lodged; some to the pope and ecumenical council acting in conjunction; some to the council, though without the pope; some to the church universal, that is, to whatever opinions universally obtain in those they term catholic countries.

So notorious it is, that even among papists there are that are more, and there are that are less, papistical. Accordingly, some even of their writers denominate those *Pontificii* papists, by way of distinction, who defend all the exorbitant claims of the papacy. Nay, so certain it is that the Romanists themselves are greatly divided on this head, that the famous council of Constance above referred to, as well as the council of Pisa that preceded it, asserted its own superiority above the pope in the most express terms, and indeed acted in an entire conformity to this doctrine *. It is not just therefore, (for our religion does

* I cannot help observing here a ridiculous blunder in the writers of the *Short View*, &c. Rem. ii. Speaking of the condemnation of Huss, they add, 'to the everlasting disgrace of an infallible pope,' &c. They have certainly derived all their knowledge of that affair from Dr. W. A. D's. letter to Mr. G. H. This should prove a caveat to those who pick up their information in this manner, not to venture a single step beyond their authority. That council acknowledged no pope, at the time that Huss was condemned. Pope John XXIII. who called them together, they deposed, on an accusation of the most shocking crimes, concerning which I shall only observe, that *heresy* and *schism* were in the number. Of the other two pretenders to the popedom, (for there had been no fewer than three ever since the council of Pisa) neither of whom they acknowledged, Gregory XII. resigned, and Benedict XIII. they afterwards deposed, and then proceeded to the election of Martin V. The council of Constance are justly chargeable with many things atrocious and tyrannical. But of the acknowledgment of the pope's infallibility they are entirely guiltless. The blunders of these writers in reasoning are not less remarkable than their misrepresentations of fact, and misapplications of Scripture. Let it serve as one out of many instances of their extraordinary mode of arguing about oaths. An oath, say they, Rem. iv. renouncing certain principles, implies that they were the man's principles before; and as an oath alters not one's principles, they are his principles still. By this wonderful method, if

not permit us to speak deceitfully even for God *) to talk of the pope's infallibility, dispensing power in respect of oaths, and the lawfulness of perfidy to heretics, as doctrines universally received in the church of Rome. These, and several such absurdities, will be found, from a proper attention to ecclesiastic history, to have ebbed and flowed, in that church, with knowledge and ignorance. In proportion as knowledge increased, those opinions lost credit; as ignorance increased, they gained credit. Whatever influence authority may have on weak minds, in making speculative dogmas, however nonsensical, be received with veneration, there is a principle in human nature, which, till the mind is wholly immersed in superstition and darkness, will effectually prevent such moral absurdities from being generally assented to. Nay, a principle of honour, as well as a sense of right, go far to check the progress of those disgraceful maxims.

I shall only add to the above remarks, that even in regard to those whose conformity to the civil establishment may not be so cordial as could be wished (for that there may be some such instances who can deny?) it will still have this good effect viewed in a political light, that it will be a check both on their actions and on their conversation. Principles openly and solemnly abjured, it may be supposed that men, especially those of a sacred character, will, for their own sakes, not to be forward to avow, and still less to inculcate. There is therefore here a real accession of strength to the civil establishment, without the smallest prejudice that I can perceive to the protestant interest.

But the incompetency even of the Bristish parliament for making such a change in the laws wherein religion is concerned, has been boldly asserted. The establishment of the present presbyterian church of Scotland was declared January 1707, a fundamental article of the union of the two kingdoms, not to be altered afterwards even by the joint legislature of both. In the act declaring this, there is a clause perpetually confirming the 5th act, parl. 1690, which was the act establishing presbytery, and ratifying the confession of faith. In this there is a gene-

a man take the oath of allegiance, he cannot give surer evidence that he is disloyal, and his taking the abjuration demonstrates him a Jacobite.

* Job. xiii. 7.

ral ratification of all former acts made against popery. But the acts now proposed to be in part repealed, could never be comprehended in that clause, because they were not former but posterior acts. The writers of the *Short View* * argue in a way entirely their own. 'The acts,' say they, 'directly relating to 'this one, and consequently ratified with it, and unalterably es- 'tablished, are chiefly three, act 2d, parl. 1700, act 3d, 1702, 'act 2d, 1703.' Now that these acts are related to act 5th, 1690, as they all relate to religion, nobody will dispute; but that they were ratified by an act ten or twelve years before they were made, these gentlemen have the whole honour of discovering. Let it be observed, that these acts, though posterior to the act 1690, were prior to the act 1707. Yet this act, for the security of religion at the union, passes over those more recent acts in relation to popery, and only declares perpetual an act made so many years before them, thereby plainly leaving the intermediate acts to the wisdom of the British legislature, to confirm, repeal, or alter at any time, as they should find expedient, and only giving perpetuity to the act that first, after the revolution, established the presbyterian form of government, and ratified the confession of faith. This argument (shall I call it?) by which these writers say modestly, their 'averment is surely 'proved to a demonstration;' I have been the more particular in exposing, because, in a certain event, it is capable of being made a very bad use of among the people.

'But whatever be in the competency of parliament, must not 'the proposed repeal be highly prejudicial to the protestant in- 'terest?' say those who consider themselves as the patrons and friends of that interest. 'Will it not throw down all our 'fences, open the door to Jesuits, seminary priests, &c. and 'give liberty to the open profession and exercise of Romish 'idolatries, as well as give full scope to their vile artifices for 'the perversion of our youth?' All this appears specious to those who do not reflect, and consider things severally and attentively. First, they may profess their religion openly and safely. Be it so. I cannot see how that circumstance alone can attribute to their increase. The quakers (a most harmless race) have long enjoyed that privilege; yet it does not appear

* Rem. I.

that they have been increasing. I think the contrary has been the fact. But if one were to devise a method for giving consequence to those of that way, and producing a change favourable to their increase, he could not devise a better than to get all those laws against papists enacted against quakers, especially if, by high premiums, wretches were bribed to turn informers, and contribute to the execution of the laws.

The bulk of mankind are more influenced by their passions, in forming their opinions, than by reason. Render people objects of our compassion, bring us once heartily to sympathize with them as with persons oppressed, not for any crime, but for what they cannot remedy, their opinions, and ye have gone a great deal to make us turn proselytes, and go over to those whom we cannot help pitying as persons suffering under the greatest cruelty and injustice. If the sufferers should display some patience and fortitude, they will need no stronger arguments to persuade spectators more remarkable for sensibility of heart than acuteness of understanding, that they must have truth upon their side. They will reverence them as saints. Wo to that nation, whose laws every sensible and honest heart must be convinced there is greater virtue in disobeying than in obeying! This is the case with persecuting laws, though the persecutors should have truth upon their side. If men, through fear of the punishments ye enact, belie their conscience, and in so doing sin against God, abjure what they believe, and profess what they think damnable errors, ye compel them to destroy their peace of mind, make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. They sin heinously; 'for whatsoever is not of faith 'is sin.' And ye legislators and judges, authors, promoters, and executors of such iniquitous laws, ye who ought to be the terror of evil doers and the praise of them that do well, ye are their tempters, seducers, and corrupters. The generality of men have a feeling of this, though they cannot reason upon it or explain it, and such a feeling has great influence among the people.

The only way I know of preventing this, is by steeling the heart against all compassion, resolving steadily to persist, and stick at nothing, till the end is attained. 'There is nothing 'so ridiculous,' says a late writer *, in respect of policy, as a

* Charact. Mis. 2. Ch. 3.

'moderate and half-way persecution. It only frets the sore; 'it raises the ill humour of mankind; excites the keener spirits; 'moves indignation in beholders; and sows the very seeds of 'schism in men's bosoms. A resolute and bold-faced persecu-'tion leaves no time or scope for these engendering distempers, 'or gathering ill humours. It does the work at once, by ex-'tirpation, banishment, or massacre.' It is indeed a fact well authenticated by history and experience, that persecution can never do service to a cause, unless it be carried the utmost length possible, as in Spain and Portugal. Now, if such a thing were practicable in this country (as blessed be God, it is not) will any protestant stand forth and say it would be desirable?

Yet that any thing less does unspeakable hurt to the cause it was meant to serve, might, if necessary, be verified by a cloud of witnesses, such as the first planting of Christianity, the reformation both abroad and at home. I shall however at this time go no farther for evidence than to what happened in this country in the last century. When the episcopal form of church government was established at the restoration, if our civil and ecclesiastic rulers had had any share of moderation, prudence, or common humanity, the minds of men would, without great difficulty, have been pretty generally conciliated to the establishment then made, as neither in doctrine nor in form of worship (for they used no liturgy) could the difference be called material. But the spirits of our governors at that time were such as bear no contradiction, and brook no delay. Their immediate recourse was to penal statutes, the first thing always thought of by men of strong passions, but weak judgment. Statutes were accordingly enacted, breathing vengeance against all who would not conform in every thing to the ecclesiastical model that had been erected. They too pleaded the right of retaliating. And it would be doing them great injustice to deny, that the conduct of those who had preceded them, had, on this head, supplied them with plenty of matter. A persecution accordingly was commenced, and furiously carried on. Numbers of unhappy men (infatuated, as some would call them) who never meant to be criminal, but who could not be brought to think it their duty to profess, through fear of human punishment, what they

did not believe, were daily sacrificed to the rage of their still more infatuated rulers. What was the consequence? Did they, by these means, stop the progress of schism, as they called it, and effect the so much desired uniformity? Quite the reverse. The tyranny of the ruling powers alienated the minds of the people; insomuch, that at the revolution, wherever the persecution had been hottest, the friends of presbytery were the most numerous: On the contrary, in those parts where the people had been blessed with pastors and rulers that were men of moderation and of a Christian spirit, there was a very general conformity to the established model.

But it will be replied, 'We do not seek to persecute; we 'desire only that things may continue as they are,—papists 'were not persecuted before the proposed repeal; and we do 'not see why they should ask any indulgence beside what was 'so generally granted them.' Is it not evident that the indulgence they had was merely by connivance? It was no legal toleration. And is it agreeable to any body to remain on so precarious a foot, and at the mercy of every body? It must be owned that the law was rarely executed, in consequence of the temper of the times, and the lenity of our government. Yet there are some instances of its having been executed. And what was the reason that it was not oftener? It was the conviction which men have, when their minds are not inflamed by fanatic zeal, that the law was too severe, and, when self-defence does not render it absolutely necessary (which God be thanked is not our case) not reconcileable with the principles either of humanity or of justice (it was, I say, this conviction) that prevented its execution. Nay, so strongly do men seem to be persuaded of its injustice, that many who are against the repeal declare solemnly that they would never give information against a papist, or take any concern in the execution of that law. Now, if it was a just and necessary law, why startle at the execution which ought to be esteemed a public service? Why were not papists, not for any wilful or intended crime, but for what, through the misfortune of their education (which might have been our own case) they believed in their conscience to be their duty; why were they not informed on, dragged before the magistrate, stript of their property, driven naked from their fami-

lies and homes, banished into foreign countries to beg or shift for bread, it may be in their old age, among strangers, the best way they could; and if they returned, why were they not hanged without mercy? for this, we are told coolly, is unavoidable *, to make the law effectual. But if acting thus would be unjust, why suffer a law to remain in force, which, if it answer no other purpose, will at least answer this bad purpose of being a reproach on the nation, and a severe retort against every protestant, who, in arguing with a papist, urges the different spirit of the two religions?

'But just or unjust,' say some, 'it is better to have it as a 'rod over their heads.' That is, in other words, 'Though we 'have no mind to do injustice at present, we wish to have it in 'our power to be unjust with impunity, when we please, nay to 'bribe others to be villains (for the law gives a high reward to 'informers) that those who have no religion at all, no sense of 'virtue or honour, who neither fear God nor regard man, may 'be tempted by avarice.' Is this a law becoming a Christian nation? Is it such as it would become the ministers of religion to interpose for either preserving or enforcing? 'Wo to him,' saith the prophet †, 'that establisheth a city by iniquity.' And shall the city of God itself, his church, his cause, the cause of truth and purity, be established by such accursed means? Are we protestants? And do we say, 'Let us do evil that good may 'come?' Yet of such the apostle tells us ‡, that their damnation is 'just.' I have ever been taught, as a Christian principle, and a protestant principle, that a good cause ought to be promoted by lawful means only; and that it was in the true spirit of popery to think that the end would justify the means. We are now adopting all their maxims, and making them our own. We seem resolved that we shall have nothing on this head to reproach papists with. A great outcry has been raised of late about the progress of popery. I join in the complaint. I see her progress where I least expected it; and I lament it heartily, the more especially as she comes in *so questionable a shape.* If we must have popery, I would, above all things, have her re-

* Short View. Note on the extracts from King William's act.
† Hab. ii. 12. ‡ Rom. iii. 8.

tain her own likeness. The devil is never so dangerous, as when he transforms himself into an angel of light.

Besides, how grossly impolitic, as well as unjust, is the proposed opposition? If we have any regard to our protestant brethren in popish countries, shall we furnish the ruling powers there, with a plausible pretext for persecuting them? 'See,' say they, referring to the presbyterian church of Scotland, 'in 'what manner we should be treated, if these our countrymen 'of the same principles with them should ever arrive at power.' This, we all know, is the common way of arguing. It is far from being a just way; for a concurrence in doctrine does not necessarily imply a concurrence in the methods to be employed in defending it. But we need the less wonder, that others should argue thus, when we argue thus ourselves. The papists in Paris about two hundred years ago massacred the Parisian protestants; and the papists in Ireland acted the like tragedy in the last century on Irish protestants; therefore we are entitled to punish for those execrable deeds the papists of the present age in this country, however guiltless of those murders, however harmless in their life and conduct we have hitherto found them; though we can charge them with no crime, but that they are papists. It is said to have been a law amongst our clans in ages of barbarity, that when a person belonging to one clan murdered a man belonging to another, the murderer, if found, was to be hanged as he deserved: but if he could not be found, the first man of the same clan that could be found, should be hanged in his stead. There is such a similarity in this to the mode of retaliation on sects, that both must certainly have sprung from the same source, the same original code of natural right!

But whencesoever this principle has arisen, it is certainly but too prevalent in most religious sects. And, if we resolve to act upon it, we do what we can to establish persecution every where, to the end of the world. We plead, that we persecute papists, because they persecute us; and they plead that they persecute us, because we persecute them. Our conduct will at this time be the more unjustifiable, because not only in protestant countries, but even in some popish countries, the ruling powers are greatly relaxing in this respect. Shall we then give a check to

their humanity, by teaching them, from our example, to account our brother-protestants a more pernicious and dangerous race than they formerly imagined them to be?

God forbid that I should put on a foot of equality the disposition of any in this country, with that of inquisitors and crusaders. I will not allow myself to think so badly even of the most violent. But I cannot avoid observing, that when once we are in this train with any adverse sect, it is impossible to say how far we may think ourselves obliged to go. The same plea of necessity to render former measures effectual, may carry us such lengths as in the beginning we should have looked on with horror.

But to return: The repeal can never do hurt, because it is the repeal of a statute, which seems, even in the judgment of our antagonists on this question, to have done no good. So far from occasioning the decrease of the number of papists, they have been, we are told, increasing for many years backwards. And this perhaps is the first instance in which the inefficacy of a law has been used as an argument against the repeal of it. That act, though severe, is not severe enough to extirpate papists; at the same time it is much too severe, considering the sentiments and manners of the times, for any but persons of no character, to assist in executing it. Thus it gives papists all the advantage of a plausible plea of suffering persecution, without being materially hurt by actual persecution. In some other countries, where Romanists, though not of the establishment, have enjoyed for centuries a legal toleration, we do not hear of any clamours about their increase, or of any dread of danger arising from them. Why then should not this nation, since we have so strong evidence that severity will not answer, be induced to make the experiment of what may be effected by the more humane and more Christian-like policy of other nations? In many instances, as has been observed by the best writers on jurisprudence, the unconscionable severity of laws has rendered them useless, nay made them serve to promote instead of checking, the growth of those evils against which they are pointed. They make those very persons screen offenders, who would otherwise assist in convicting them. So much in regard to the justice and expediency of the measure in general.

I shall now take the freedom to consider a little, with all respect to my ecclesiastical superiors, the propriety of their interfering in this business. I have no right to lay down rules: But as a brother and fellow-minister, I offer my opinion on a case in which the cause of religion in general, and the character of ministers of the gospel in particular, are concerned. I have not the remotest wish, that any regard may be paid to my judgment, further than is due to the reasons by which it is supported. It was observed before, that the question of the expediency or danger of the measure, in respect of the public, is not properly of the department of our judicatories. The only question that can strictly be said to come under their cognizance as church courts, is that discussed in the former chapter, whether the toleration, or the persecution of such people, be most conformable to the spirit and laws of our holy religion. There are extraordinary cases in which, I acknowledge, it may be pardonable, perhaps commendable, in the pastors to step aside a little, for the sake of doing some signal service whereby the cause they are engaged in may be advanced, and the honour of the master whom they serve, promoted. Let us see whether an application from the representative of this church, of the kind that was proposed at the last meeting of the General Assembly, and will, in all probability, be again moved at the ensuing, would answer these important ends. Waving the arguments already used, and which to me appear unanswerable, I shall only here advert to two things, first, to what suits the ministerial character to do; and, secondly, to what will probably be the consequences of the measure proposed in the last assembly, if it shall now be adopted.

In regard to the former, it is the observation of an ingenious modern, that the magistrate and the pastor, are both denominated God's ministers, but in very different senses. The magistrate is the minister of divine justice; the pastor is the minister of divine goodness and grace. A most just and pertinent observation. The former accordingly beareth not the sword in vain; the latter cometh announcing peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. The service he is engaged in is styled the ministry of reconciliation. The former operates chiefly by fear, being the terror of evil doers; the latter chiefly by love, in the dis-

play he makes of the tender mercies of God and the love of Jesus. There is a beauty in preserving consistency of character, and on the contrary, there is something singularly shocking to men whose taste is not totally depraved, in a gross violation of character. Sanguinary measures are, on certain occasions, very suitable in the officer of justice; but it ill becomes the messenger of peace to breathe out, like Saul the Pharisee (unconverted indeed, but not the less zealous,) threatenings and slaughter. The sense of what became a minister of the new covenant, a preacher of good will to men, was so strong on the minds of the primitive Christians, that when our religion came first into favour with the magistrate, it was looked on universally as a becoming action in the ministers to use their good offices in behalf of an unhappy creature who had exposed himself to the stroke of public justice, wherever any favourable circumstances could be pleaded in extenuation of his crime. But in no case whatever was it thought suitable that he should interpose to call for vengeance. That the servant of the prince of peace should prove a peacemaker, mediator, and intercessor, was entirely consonant to the nature of his office; but that he should interpose as an avenger, or as an instigator of others to vengeance, or to violent and vindictive measures, was considered as a practical denial of the Lord that bought him, who came not to destroy men's lives but to save them; and as what suited more the character of that being whom they called the adversary and accuser of the brethren.

If, by some means or other, our legislature had been incited to think of imposing new restraints, or inflicting new pains and penalties on papists, or on dissenters of any denomination, it would have been excusable, nay, on account of the motive, might have been thought praiseworthy in the ministers of religion, to represent, with all due respect, that they hoped, by the use of arms more evangelical, the end might be attained, and the public sufficiently secured from danger. But the interposition proposed at present is of a very different kind. To what shall I compare it? A culprit more unfortunate than criminal stands before his judge. The sword is unsheathed and ready to strike. Several humane persons intercede, mention every alleviating circumstance, propose taking security of the convict that he

shall behave himself properly, and beg that the sword may again be sheathed. The magistrate relents, and is on the point of complying, when a person of a grave aspect interposes, who, though he carry the olive branch, the ensign of peace, in his hand, with a countenance more stern than meek, to the surprise of every body, cries to the officer of justice, What are you going to do? No security can bind that wretch; and no where can the sword of justice be sheathed at this time so properly as in his bowels. This parable I leave to the reflection of my readers.

I shall add a few words on the consequences of the application. I admit that, if made, it will possibly be successful, not from any conviction of the propriety of making it, or of the fitness of what is asked. But a flame, little to our credit, has been raised in the country; and it may be thought that yielding to the humour, however reprehensible, and granting what is asked, is a less evil, than a positive refusal might prove, especially considering the state of public affairs at present. But the question of greatest moment is, In what light will the application represent the spirit of our people in general, and this national church in particular, to the constituent branches of the British senate? It should be remembered how different the fate of the like bill was in England, and even in Ireland, where that sect, with some colour of reason, might have been accounted dangerous. But here! where comparatively they are so inconsiderable both in number and property,—I could say a great deal, but I forbear. I will not dissemble. I am both ashamed and grieved, that there should be occasion to say any thing on such a subject.

In what light will our conduct appear, when contrasted with that of the English and Irish bishops, whom it would be absurd as well as uncharitable to accuse of indifference in such a cause, and who, as members of the legislature, readily concurred in granting the relief desired in their countries? Is it possible that any of us are simple enough to imagine that, with judicious persons, the comparison will redound to our honour?

Yet amid so many grounds of mortification, I am happy to have it in my power to say, that in the last assembly, a most respectable assembly, and far the most numerous I ever witness-

ed, (and I have witnessed many) a motion for an application of this nature was thrown out as altogether improper and unbecoming, by a very great plurality of voices. It ought also to be attended to, that this happened when men had nothing to influence their judgment but the merits of the question, not a single person that I know of, having had the least knowledge of such a motion till it was made in the house. Tumultuous conventions and mobs and other lawless excesses had not then been artfully produced to terrify those who could not be convinced. I had never before so distinct an idea of what is called in ecclesiastic history, preaching a crusade; at the same time I must regret that I should ever have acquired additional knowledge on this subject, from any thing to be seen in this protestant land.

I beg it may also be observed that popery is not the only adversary we have to struggle with. I do not speak of the opposition we are exposed to from other sects much more numerous. I speak of the infidelity, the scepticism, the open profaneness, and contempt of all religion that so much abound in this age and country, a far more formidable foe than popery. Is it a matter of no consequence to us, how our conduct may affect this evil, either by adding strength to it, and furnishing libertines with new arguments for fortifying themselves in their impiety, or by acting such a part, as must tend to silence and confute them? It is well known that persons of this stamp are the declared enemies of our order. Let us try to draw instruction from the reproaches, and even the aspersions of our enemies. Amongst other things, they arraign all clergymen of whatever sect, for a pride which takes fire at the least contradiction, for an ambition or lust of power, which makes all rivalry insupportable, and as the natural consequence of these, for a persecuting spirit, which all possess against the common enemy, and every single sect possesses against every other. The common maxim of these men is, 'Priests of all religions are the same.' That the character which they draw, is done with much exaggeration and malevolence, no impartial person will deny. Nor will it be denied by such, on the other hand, that the unamiable spirit too often displayed by those who ought to have been not only defenders, but patterns of religion, has given too great scope for such accusations.

It was lately proposed in Sweden, a Lutheran, and therefore a protestant country, to give a toleration to all dissenters. This measure would have chiefly affected Calvinists, and next to them, if I mistake not, papists. The clergy opposed it. But, as the other estates of the kingdom approved the measure, it took place. Should we now, like the Swedish clergy, interpose in order to frustrate the gracious intentions of the legislature, would it not contribute to confirm the irreligious in their errors? Could we be surprised that they should exclaim in triumph, 'It is precisely as we thought. They are all the same 'thing at bottom; Papist, Lutheran, Calvinist, &c. &c. Their 'differences consist in a few trifling ceremonies, or unintel-'ligible logomachies, but the same spirit pervades the whole, 'the same pride, the same intolerance, the same inclination to 'domineer, and to crush all that oppose them?' I know it will be said, 'What have we to do to mind the speeches of 'the profane and graceless? They neither do nor will favour 'us, whatever part we act.' I imagine that even the profane and graceless ought not to be despaired of, and consequently that their sentiments and speeches ought not to be altogether disregarded. Such are not always irreclaimable. Much less ought we to furnish them with what may serve not only to confirm them in their pernicious course, but to prove the instruments of gaining over others to their party. The apostle Peter did not think the sentiments even of heathens were to be despised by the disciples, and therefore enjoined them to be careful that their conversation might be honest among the Gentiles, that they may be ashamed who falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ *. And the apostle Paul makes the opinion of infidels of so great consequence, that he expressly requires, that regard be had to it, even in the election of a bishop. 'He 'must have a good report of them which are without †.' Shall we then think it a matter of no moment, that we give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme? Does it appear to us a thing absolutely indifferent, that the good ways of the Lord are, by our means, evil spoken of among them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is it all one whether fools be recovered by us, or confirmed in their folly?

* 1 Pet. ii. 12. iii. 16. † 1 Tim. iii. 7.

I conclude with my most fervent prayers to the God of grace and Father of mercies, that he would be pleased to direct the great council of our church, as on every occasion, so particularly on the present, that he would inspire them with the amiable spirit of their Master, with the wisdom that is from above, which is not like the wisdom of the worldling, earthly, sensual, devilish, but first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; that we may all know, by experience, that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.

CHAP. III.

The proper and Christian Expedients for promoting Religious Knowledge, and repressing Error.

It requires but little art to make ignorance jealous. The multitude every where are ignorant, and, by consequence, easily inflamed with jealousy. It requires but few (sometimes a single person has been sufficient) of those in whom the populace confide, to suggest that there is danger, and they are instantly alarmed; they ask neither evidence nor explanation. As the flame spreads, its influence on every individual increases. Each is actuated not only by the fervour originally excited in himself, but by that which is, as it were, reflected from every countenance around him. When the fury of the people, from a notion of gross injury, is worked up to a certain pitch, they are no longer capable of control. They encourage one another by their number and rage. There is nothing which they do not think themselves able to effect. They run headlong into the most violent excesses. Whatever be the cause they contend for, they have not so much as an idea of any other expedients than such as are dictated by fury. It happens then almost invariably that they over-shoot the aim of those who first raised the alarm, and awaked their jealousy. And when they interpose to restrain them, they generally find it impracticable. For the people then have no ears for any language but that of their passions. In vain are they reminded that more moderate me-

thods were pointed out to them from the beginning. If the rabble are to be set to work, they must be allowed to go to work their own way. They have neither capacity nor patience for pursuing moderate methods.

For these reasons it would not be consonant to justice to charge the effects of the popular frenzy wholly on those who at first were active in alarming them. As little would it be, on the other hand, wholly to exculpate the first instigators. That they did not foresee the fires that would be kindled, and the destruction that would ensue, and were therefore not the intentional causes of the particular outrages, justice as well as charity require us to admit; but that any one, who inflames the minds of the multitude, must be sensible, that he endangers the peace of his country, as well as the property and lives of his fellow-citizens, and therefore, by all the principles of law, is responsible for the consequences, cannot be denied. And even on the principles of sound morality, he is so far answerable, as the consequences actually were, or might have been, foreseen by him. Nor is it easy in this case to find an apology for the heart, that is not at the expence of the understanding.

But we can say the less in behalf of those from whom the evil originated, because their more moderate methods are as really unjustifiable, on the maxims of the gospel, as the more violent methods of the multitude. The difference between them is not so much in kind as in degree. The introduction of force into the service of religion, whether applied by the magistrate, or by the mob, has ever proved, and will prove the bane of true religion. It is the establishment of the profession of religion on the ruins of its spirit. It is attempting to support Christianity by undermining virtue. It presents the strongest temptations to what every one who reflects, whatever be his system of opinions, must admit to be the grossest crimes. It is one of the earliest corruptions of antichristian Rome, the spiritual Babylon, and the source of most of her other abominations. I may add, it is a sure evidence, that we have not yet recovered from the intoxication occasioned by the envenomed cup of which she has made all nations drink, when we so entirely adopt her sentiments, and speak her language. Ill does it befit in particular the shepherds of Christ's flock to recur to such unsanctified ex-

pedients. 'To what expedients shall we then recur, when an 'immediate danger threatens?' To such only as are (if I may be allowed the expression) congenial to the service.

But let it be observed, that there is not always danger when the cry is raised. There is no more real danger here at present to protestantism from popery, than there was in England to episcopacy in queen Anne's time, from protestant dissenters, when the like cry of the danger of the church, from a cause as trivial, excited such tumults throughout that nation, or than there was to Christianity itself not thirty years ago from judaism, on occasion of the naturalization bill, or Jew bill, which put all England in a ferment. The mode of arguing adopted at that time in England, in regard to Jews, was remarkably similar to that now used in this country, in regard to papists. If Jews, it was said, were allowed but liberty, they would soon become possessed of power. If they were, in any case, permitted to acquire real, (or what we commonly call *heritable*) property, they would soon be proprietors of the whole kingdom; if entire freedom were given to their religious profession, judaism would soon become predominant; circumcision in less than a century would be established by act of parliament, and our churches would all be converted into synagogues. Then would commence the persecution of Christians. And for this purpose crosses, not crucifixes, would be erected in every market town.

By I know not what infatuation, it happens almost every where, that the bulk of the people seem disposed to think, that if any sect, how insignificant soever, were to enjoy the same freedom in its religious profession with those of the establishment, though without any share of power, it would quickly be preferred by every body, and the established worship would be totally deserted. One would think that at bottom there lurked some apprehension, that the established model is of all religious professions the most unpopular in the country, or would soon become so, if any competitor were admitted; that consequently they imputed the preference given it by the people solely to their ignorance, and were inclined to suspect, that, on a fair examination, it would prove the most irrational and the most unscriptural. They act as though they thought, that without its legal prerogatives, particularly without the signal advantage of

penal statutes, suppressing, or, at least, checking other sects, it would not have so much as an existence. Now what is most extraordinary is, that the people who seem to be actuated by such unaccountable suspicions are not those who think most unfavourably of the establishment; on the contrary, they are commonly the greatest sticklers for its absolute perfection in every article. I do not accuse one national church, or one sect in particular, of this absurdity. It is pretty common to all: In this respect popery, prelacy, presbytery, are the same.

Now of all religious parties, the papists, to do them justice, are the most excusable in entertaining these suspicions. The reason is evident. No party can worse bear being brought to an open trial. Error, like vice, shuns the light. Virtue and truth, ought, on the contrary, to seek it. To the latter it is as beneficial, as it is fatal to the former. It was in the night, while men slept, in the decline of all useful knowledge, and the rapid advance of ignorance and barbarity, that the tares of popery were sown by the enemy among the wheat of the gospel, that good seed which had been sown by the Son of man. What was nourished by ignorance, and could have been nourished by it only, must be hurt by knowledge. No wonder then that popery should dread inquiry, should admit no competition, should not give so much as a hearing to an adversary wherever she can avoid it. Reason is against her, Scripture is against her, nay antiquity (which with those unversed in history, never with the knowing, she is fond to plead) is against her. What has she then to trust to, but the tyrant's iron rod? But for protestants to show the like illiberal suspiciousness is to betray their own cause, and sin against the majesty of truth. Truth requires but the light; because, in regard to her, to be known is to be loved; error screens herself in darkness, being conscious, that, in regard to her, to be seen is to be hated. It is the common sign of a bad cause to be suspicious of itself, and to avoid a fair inquiry. This is one of the many evil symptoms which strongly mark the cause of Rome.

But, in order to a fair inquiry, some things are previously necessary. Such are the means of knowledge, and the means of support to those employed in conveying knowledge. In these

days we have no ground to look for miraculous assistance. The church, now arrived at maturity, is largely supplied with all necessary evidence within herself, and no longer needs those props and supports she was obliged to lean upon in her infant years. But the effects produced by those miracles still remain with us as evidences of the reality of the account, and the fulfilment of prophecies in regard to the progress, the most memorable events, the establishment and the defection of the church, which in the early days they could not have, amply supply to us the want of present miracles. If we use properly the spiritual weapons suited to this spiritual warfare, we shall have no reason to despair of success. That human means ought to be employed none but the merest enthusiasts will deny. Only let them be such human means as suit the cause of truth and charity.

If popery, as has been contended, has been, in some places, on the increase, it will be found, on inquiry, that it has been only where the people unhappily are far removed from the means of knowledge. The evil itself, which is ignorance, points out the cure. Introduce the light, and the darkness is dispelled. In large and extensive parishes in the Highlands, they often recur to popish teachers, because they have no other. Where there is gross ignorance, there are also no doubt barbarity and superstition. And wherever these are, the absurdities of popery are better suited to the taste of the people, than the doctrines of a more rational religion. Now that in parishes in the Highlands and western isles, some of sixteen, some of twenty-five, some of thirty miles in length, and from five to seven in breadth, some containing near three thousand inhabitants, where they have but one protestant pastor, how can they escape being perverted to popery? This must appear a necessary consequence, when we consider the uncommon zeal which papists have always shown for making proselytes.

Now for redressing this grievance what is to be done? I know only two methods, compulsion and persuasion. If we recur to the first, and after it, though by no means a Christian method, the general hankering seems to be, what will our penal laws signify in those islands and tracts of land where the papists in number compared with the protestants, are already by the ac-

count that has been given *, as thirty to one in some places, in others as twenty, in others as ten? Or what end would it answer, though we should get laws ten times more severe than those in force at present? Can we imagine, that any person, however well inclined to the work, would be so mad as to attempt, in those districts, to execute the laws? Sanguinary statutes, in such cases, do but show the impotence of the legislative power, and embolden people the more openly to set it at defiance. They will have this additional motive in a cause like this, that the more daring their transgression of our laws is, the greater will be their merit with their party, because done for the interest of the church. Can any person, who reflects, be so infatuated as to think, that in this way any service will be done to protestantism? That such fruitless attempts will do it great disservice, one must be totally blinded by his prejudices not to perceive. The minds of the people will more than ever be alienated from us; their numbers will strengthen their resolution; and their success will ensure their perseverance. To me it is manifest that in such parishes at least, the repeal proposed will be favourable to the other, and the only Christian method of persuasion, because it will be of great use to us for gaining their confidence, and bringing them without suspicion to join with us in other ordinary affairs. If we will not admit persons who offer themselves as friends and fellow-citizens, and accept such service from them for the defence of the state, as they think they can in a consistency with their duty give us, we in a manner force them to combine with one another, for their own defence, against us. We gain to ourselves, besides all the odium of being persecutors, without gaining any thing to the cause. They will have all the advantage of the plea of being persecuted for conscience sake, without sustaining any loss by persecution. We arm their minds with prejudices against us, and deprive ourselves of the power of ever gaining on them by softer methods. In brief, if nothing will please but the antichristian plan of converting by the sword, and if we are now so unaccustomed to evangelical weapons that we should be utterly at a loss how to use them, we have no chance at all, on that plan, if we set about

* See the account published by the society for propagating Christian knowledge in 1774.

the work in a faint-hearted manner, and adopt the measures of Antichrist by halves. We shall but expose ourselves, and be found in the end to have done more ill than good.

'Well, if we are not to go faintly to work,' it may be asked, 'what is the stout-hearted method you would propose?' I answer, What would the papists, our admired masters, in this motely spiritual temporal warfare, have done in the like case? For though in words we loudly condemn their conduct, we are ever recurring to their example for a pattern, and to serve as a justification of ourselves. I should rather ask, What did they when heretics were so numerous that penal laws could have no effect? Their aim was then to subdue them by the sword. They instituted a crusade, and made war upon them as the enemies of Christ. This was their method with the Albigenses. Soldiers were inlisted in Christ's name; for those pretended servants would fight for him, in spite of himself. An army was accordingly sent to convince the heretics of their errors, after the military fashion, and convert them at the point of the sword. Those who were so obstinately unreasonable as not to be convinced by such weighty arguments, were butchered without mercy. Christ's kingdom had, in their hands, totally changed its character. By his account, it was not proper for his servants to fight, unless his kingdom were, what it was not, a worldly kingdom. By their account, nothing was so proper. But the mystery is unravelled when we reflect that the kingdom they fought for was in fact a worldly kingdom, misnamed Christ's. Now if we are capable of adopting the like measures, and in order to grace the annals of Scotland for the eighteenth century, were to institute a protestant crusade, we are, I am afraid, but ill furnished (admitting we obtain all the assistance we can expect from the secular arm) with the means of executing such a plan. The pope is much better provided in resources for an undertaking of this sort. His soldiers, beside all temporal advantages, receive out of the church's inexhaustible treasury plenty of pardons and indulgences, and a sure passport to heaven, in case they should die in the cause. We have abandoned all pretensions to such trumpery, and, however convenient it might be for us, I question whether it would be in our power now to resume it.

There is no exaggeration, no hyperbole, in what I say; I insist on it seriously, that if the popish and not the Christian mode of conversion is to be adopted, there is not a step on this side the utter extirpation of those that will not yield, at which we can stop, without doing the cause of protestantism more injury than service. Now it is only in those Highland parishes that I find any complaints of the increase of popery. The smallest degree of attention to the above mentioned accounts, published by the society, makes it evident that it has been occasioned neither by the want of penal laws, nor by failure in the execution, for in both respects they were on the same footing with other parts of the country, but by the want of instruction. The places that we deserted, they occupied. Can we wonder at this? Would we have the people be atheists? If we will give them no religion, can we blame them for accepting one from those that are willing to give it? In the lowlands, which are far more populous, where the parishes are much less extensive, and generally well supplied both in ministers and in schoolmasters, we find no reason for such complaints. In regard to people of rank, we have been rather gaining ground than losing it. The only places where there is immediate occasion for a check are the Highlands and western isles; and in these it is plain, that any coercive methods which have yet been thought of, would prove totally ineffectual. It would be impossible in that way to answer any valuable purpose, unless we were to proceed to such extremities, as I hope (notwithstanding the ugly appearances of late in some of our principal cities) we have not retained so much of the spirit of popery as to be able to think of.

If it is in vain then to recur to the weapons of Babylon, let us be induced to betake ourselves to the armory of Christ. Had we but half the zeal that we may be Christians ourselves, which we have that others may not be papists, there would be no occasion for arguments on this head. Nothing can be more manifest than that the great cause of the evil complained of, is the want of protestant teachers, both pastors and schoolmasters. And the principal causes of this deficiency are, the immoderate extent of parishes, and the want of livings. If a proper method could be devised for supplying this defect; if new erections were made from time to time where most needed, and the new erect-

ed parishes suitably supplied, there would be great ground to hope that, in process of time, a considerable change, in respect of Christian knowledge, might be effected. We shall be convinced of this truth, if we but reflect, that, in the Highlands, popery and ignorance are always found to go together. And even where the measures proposed may have little effect at first, in surmounting prejudices, and producing conversions, it will not be without its use, in preventing further seductions.

But the great difficulty lies here. How are the teachers to be supported? Where are our funds? Great zeal has appeared of late for the protestant interest. In order to oppose any parliamentary relief to papists, money, I am told, has been contributed, and subscriptions given to a considerable amount. Some noted boroughs and corporations have even gone so far as to engage lawyers for opposing it in parliament. I should be happy to have it in my power to convince these people, of what is a most certain, and, in my judgment, a most evident truth, that the money thus contributed will be of real service to the cause which they wish to promote, if given for raising a fund for supplying the Highlands properly with teachers, of which there is still such manifest need. I appeal to those zealous persons themselves, if they can but reflect coolly on any thing, whether this be not, beyond all comparison, a more feasible way (and let me add, a more creditable way) of serving the cause of protestantism, than to throw money away on lawyers, in order to prevent the repeal of a law which, by their own confession, has not been of the smallest utility, for checking the evil complained of.

But it may be said, that though such an application of the money were agreed to by the contributors and subscribers, it would go but a short way, perhaps not farther than the endowment of a single parish, if even so far. This however would be something. But what I have yet mentioned is not the whole. There are many in the country, not only private persons but communities, who highly disapprove the proposed opposition to the repeal, who think it would be not only dishonourable, and unbefitting the cause of Christianity, but even prejudicial, though attended with success, who nevertheless would gladly embrace an opportunity of contributing to advance

the cause by Christian methods, and of demonstrating to the world, that they are not (as they have been misrepresented by persons whose zeal far outstrips their judgment) people who care for none of these things. Let but an attempt of this kind be set on foot, and more perhaps will be given than is at present imagined.

It will be said, 'Was there not a collection made by order 'of Assembly, a few years ago, for the purpose now mentioned, 'which amounted to a very small matter? We have not great 'encouragement, then, to expect much in this way.' To this I reply, 1st, The generality of mankind are apt to be remiss and inattentive to things of this nature, till some remarkable event happen to rouse them. The alarms lately raised have supplied us with such an event. 2dly, The example of the liberality of those communities and individuals who had intended the same good end (though by means we think neither judicious nor justifiable) might, it would be hoped, excite emulation in others who would choose to show that they are not inferior in their ardour for the protestant cause, when its advancement is not pursued by Romish expedients. 3dly, It may not be improper, if it shall seem meet to the wisdom of our ecclesiastical superiors in the ensuing assembly, to recommend to synods or presbyteries to choose fit persons, both ministers and elders, for receiving subscriptions from persons of rank and others, within their respective jurisdictions, beside appointing a collection to be made in the parish churches from the common people, and to recommend also to the royal boroughs, which are all represented in the Assembly, to obtain the aid of their respective corporations for a service that in every view should be admitted by protestants to be pious, charitable, and Christian, in respect both of the end and of the means. Were a plan of this kind to be adopted, I should not doubt of our getting liberal assistance from many wealthy persons in England, from Scotchmen abroad, and even others well affected both to the protestant religion, and to the cause of liberty. The money collected ought doubtless to be intrusted to the management of the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge, whose known integrity and zeal, as well as their acquaintance with the state of the Highlands and western isles, render them of all persons the

fittest for such a trust. I had the first suggestion of a scheme of this kind from a gentleman of this place, who thinks as I do, in regard to our late alarms; but who, if a method becoming Christians and protestants be agreed to, I have reason to believe, will, as well as many others, contribute liberally. If measures of this kind should be adopted, I think it would not be a difficult matter to evince that the proposed repeal, instead of doing hurt, would be of service, in more ways than one. But to conclude,

Is there not at least some probability, that if this, or something of the kind, were done, a reformation in the Highlands might in part be effected? But what do they themselves, that espouse measures of coercion, say, is to be expected in their way? I shall suppose they succeed. The act of king William, about which the dispute arose, remains as it was. And what will the cause of protestantism gain thereby in the Highlands? Or what will the cause of popery lose? It would be easier to point out, on the other hand, what will be the probable loss of protestantism and gain of popery. The measures pursued will prove a good handle for working up what at present is no more than a passive compliance with popery, as being the only religion that is rendered accessible to them, into an active zeal for the cause, and an implacable hatred of those whom they will be made to consider as not only their enemies, but the enemies of God. And what effect the appearance of persecution may have, in places abounding with papists, on weak and ill instructed protestants, I will not say. For my part, I acknowledge that my dislike to popery is so great, that I would never do it so much honour as to give it either martyrs or confessors to boast of. The method I propose has a direct tendency to remove the evil, without exasperating men's minds; and far from bringing a disgrace upon our church and nation, it will redound greatly to our honour.

Indeed, I can conceive but one objection against it, which is, I own, as times are, a great one, namely, that it is a Christian method. For, to say the truth, Christian methods of conversion are become so obsolete, in Christendom, that it looks rather romantic to propose them. This makes me fear much lest that objection alone prove sufficient to defeat the project. We

are very zealous without doubt, and so are the papists. And what does their zeal mostly, and ours too, amount to? Just to this, that we can be persuaded to do any thing for God's sake, except to love God and our neighbour. Of all tasks this is the hardest. For the sake of God men will divest themselves of humanity; and to advance their church, will sacrifice every remain of virtue, will even turn assassins and incendiaries. But how few in comparison can be persuaded, for God's sake, to make a sacrifice of their pride, of their revenge, of their malice, and other unruly passions? Who can be induced to be humble, to be meek, to be humane, to be charitable, to be forgiving, and to adopt their Master's rule of doing to others as they would that others should do to them.

Permit me, then, my dear countrymen, fellow-Christians, and fellow-protestants, to beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that ye would maturely weigh this most momentous business, and not suffer your minds by any means to be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Remember, oh remember, that if ye would serve God indeed, ye must serve him in his own way. We show an absolute distrust in him, and a want of faith in the principles for which we pretend to be zealous, when we cannot restrain ourselves to those means only for the advancement of his cause, which are warranted by his word. God grant you understanding in all things.

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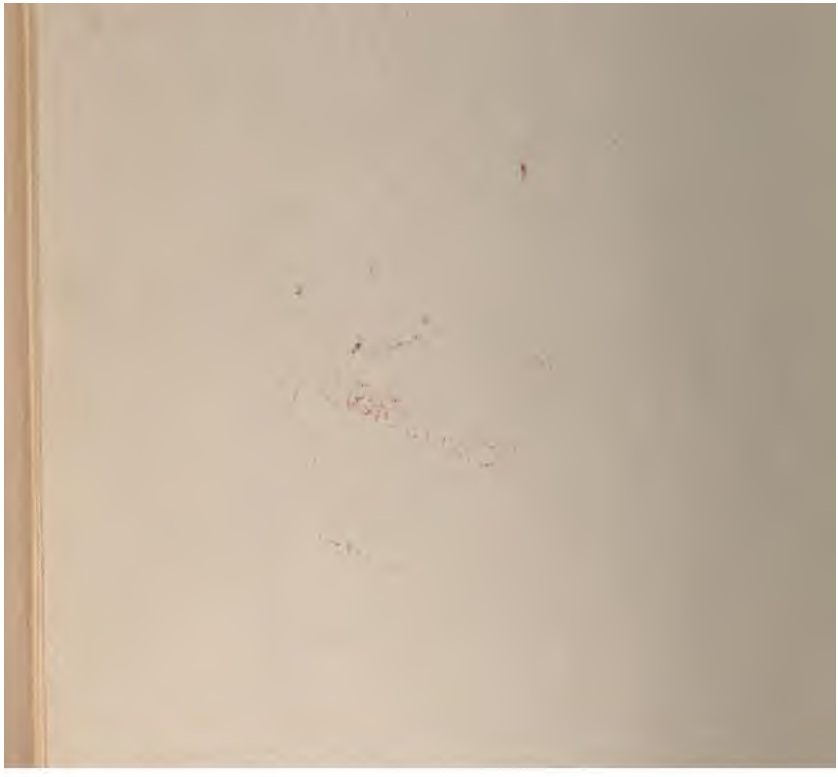

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